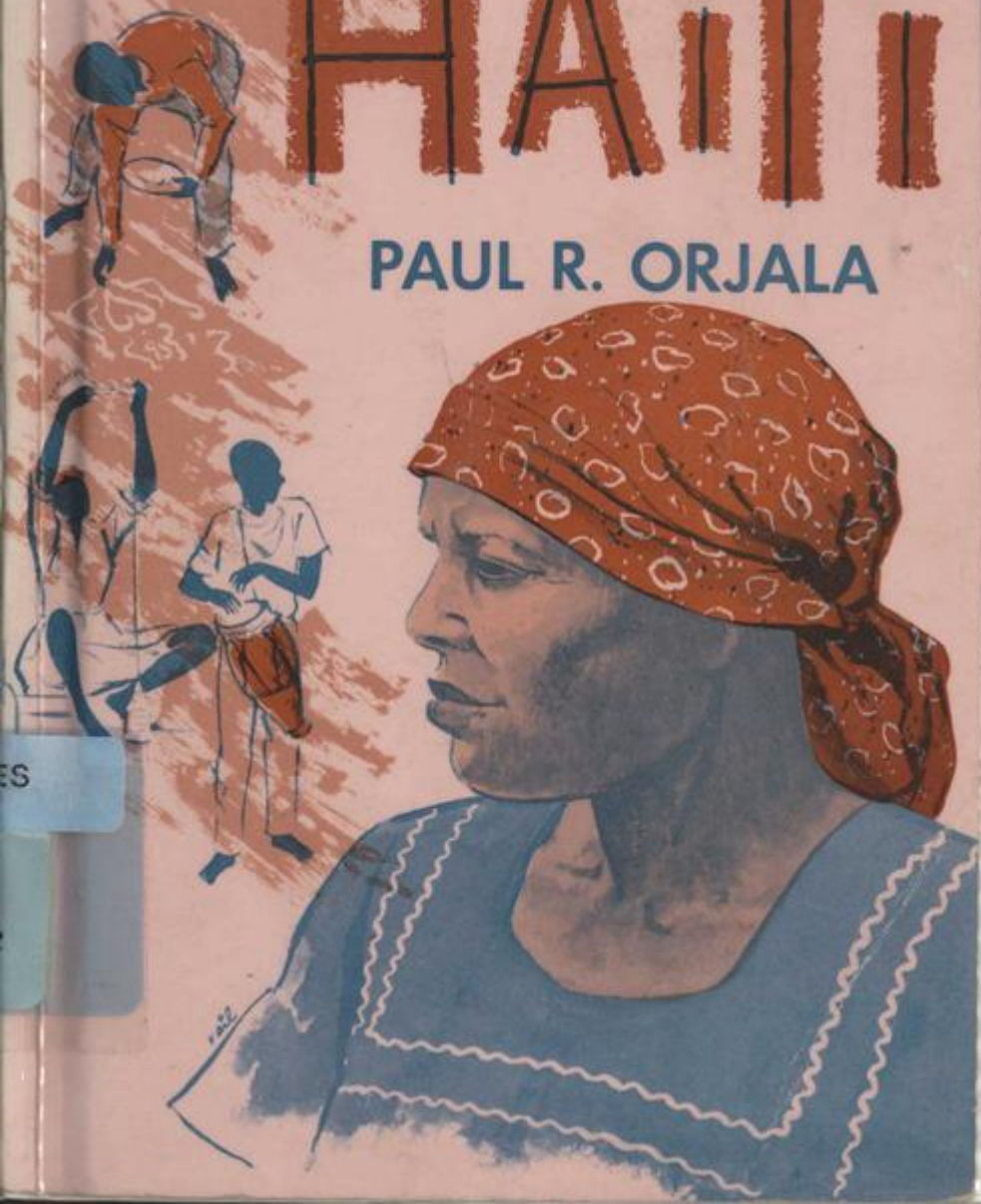
THIS IS HAITI

PAUL R. ORJALA



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Kansas City, Missouri
Nazarene Publishing House

First Printing, 1961

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

Down in the West Indies just off Florida there is a fascinating Negro republic inhabited by some of the most friendly people on earth. They use French as their official language, but they draw their deep roots from Africa. THIS IS HAITI.

This is not a travel book nor a sociological study, though it may contain some elements of both. It was written to introduce a comparatively new field to you Nazarenes who love the cause of missions and who sent us as your ambassadors to Haiti. Our purpose is to give you facts and inspiration which will help you to pray intelligently and bear a real burden for the Haitian people, who have become "our people" during the past ten years.

This is not a complete book on Haiti. We have left many things unsaid. But if you are interested in reading more about Haiti, there is a list of suggested books at the close of this volume.

Occasionally during the book you will find pronunciation helps for some French and Creole words. The pronunciation indicated is only approximate, due to the basic differences between the sound systems of English and the other languages, but it is given to help make the text easier to read.

In reading these pages may you come to love the Haitian people and feel, as we do, that in Haiti God has given the Church of the Nazarene one of the greatest opportunities of the twentieth century for fulfilling the Great Commission and leading men and women into the life of holiness.

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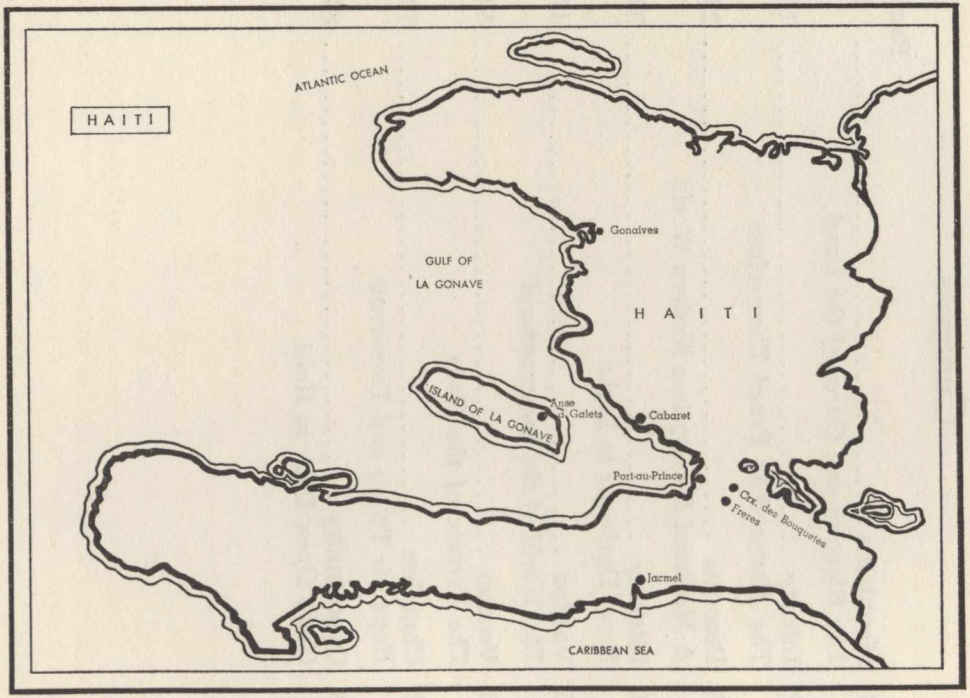
HAITI
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Gonaives
GULF OF
LA GONAVE
H A I T I
ISLAND OF LA GONAVE
Anse
a Galets
Cabaret
Port-au-Prince
Crx. des Bouquets
Freres
Jacmel
CARIBBEAN SEA

CHAPTER 1

Mountains

The Blessing and Curse of the Land

"Will you look at those mountains!" I shouted to my wife, Mary, above the engine noise of the plane as we skirted the central coast of Haiti just minutes before arriving in Port-au-Prince on October 3, 1950. "Look at the way they rise almost straight up from the sea to at least three or four thousand feet elevation, with their heads in the clouds." And I snapped my first Kodachrome slide of Haiti. It turned out beautifully.

Centuries before, the Indians had beat me to the draw with their comments. They named this fascinating land "Haiti," which in their tongue meant "land of mountains."

When we left the United States, our plane flight had taken us southeast from Miami, Florida, diagonally across the eastern tip of Cuba. The first land we caught sight of in Haiti was the northern peninsula, which points toward nearby Cuba. There is also a southern peninsula stretching out toward Jamaica. Our plane then continued heading southeast for Port-au-Prince, the capital city, where we landed 643 miles from Miami and about three hours' flying time.

Just a couple of years later I rode for five hours back into those very mountains on horseback to visit an outstation begun by one of our preachers. There I had one of the most moving experiences of my life when several dozen mountain young people came down the trail to meet their first missionary with little bouquets of wild

orchids in their hands. They were singing, *"Beni Soit celui qui vient au nom du Seigneur!"* ("Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!") I was overcome with the feeling of my unworthiness that they should sing for me these words which were sung so long ago for my Lord. Yet they expressed perfectly the reason for my coming to Haiti and to these mountains: to come in the name of the Lord in order to make known the good news of salvation.

The story is told that one of the early explorers was asked by the Spanish king what Haiti was like. The explorer picked up a piece of paper, crumpled it in his hand, threw it on the table, and said, "That, Sir, is what Haiti is like!"

This story is not far from wrong. Haiti has an area of 10,700 square miles, roughly the size of Maryland. But about four-fifths of it is covered with mountains—more mountainous than Switzerland! Its rugged ranges rise to 9,000 feet and divide up the country in such a way that roads are very difficult to build and maintain.

The slopes of these mountains were originally forested with magnificent stands of pine, mahogany, and other valuable woods. But today, although there are some lovely pine forest reserves set aside, the mountains in general have been denuded to make place for garden plots for the land-hungry people. The resultant erosion is one of the major problems of Haiti.

The population of Haiti today is between three and four million, giving a population density of over 300 per square mile, including the mountains. This, plus the fact that only about 12 per cent of the people live in cities or towns, explains why the land problem is so acute. There are only ten cities in Haiti with more than 5,000 inhabitants. One can hardly walk over any trail in Haiti for more than ten or fifteen minutes without passing a house.

One of the things that bothered us as young missionaries during our first year was that we could hardly go anywhere or do anything without someone watching us or coming to help us or talk to us. Privacy is almost unknown in Haitian culture, and it is difficult for the Haitians to understand why we foreigners sometimes want to be by ourselves.

When someone asks what the weather is like in Haiti, we ask, "Where?" For the mountains control that question too. One can have almost any kind of weather he wants in Haiti simply by changing altitude.

At sea level the climate is tropical—just plain hot in summer but very nice in the winter, much like Florida. At 1,000 feet elevation the climate is delightful most of the year. Our headquarters and Bible school are located just a little lower than this in the foothills near Port-au-Prince. At 4,000 feet and above, it is much like Southern California. There is usually a nip in the air at night, and winter temperatures occasionally fall almost to freezing. Snow has been known to fall in the highest mountains, but only to melt on contact with the ground.

Rainfall varies from about 10 inches a year in desert-like regions to 130 inches a year in the inland valley of Mirebalais. The rainy seasons also vary in different parts of the country; but in central Haiti there are usually two rainy seasons, one in the fall and one in the spring, with a winter dry season in between.

Outstanding reserves of mineral wealth are found quite largely in the mountains of Haiti. They have been completely undeveloped until recently. The Renolds Company has been mining bauxite (aluminum ore) in the south at Miragoane for several years, and we have visited Consolidated Honeywell's copper mine in the north near Gonaives, which is nearly operational. Some rare metals have also been discovered, and there are possible oil reserves yet to be tapped.

And yet Haiti is poor, the poorest country in the Americas. Its standard of living has been called "incompressible." Why?

There are many reasons to explain why Haiti remains underdeveloped. For one thing, the political instability of Haiti in the past has not allowed any one administration enough time to benefit the country with a development plan. And such plans take money, which has not been available in adequate amounts from either governmental or private sources due to the generally depressed economy.

The government is only too painfully aware of these basic problems, and it has set about systematically to try to do something about it. It has started to carry out long-range plans to bolster the economy through the attraction of foreign capital, development of resources, encouragement of new industries, increased housing, community development, and expansion in education.

There have been great expectations in the past in what could be accomplished through the United Nations and U.S. Point Four agencies in co-operation with the Haiti government. It would be wrong to say that they have not accomplished much. On the contrary, they have made great changes in the Haitian national life.

The World Health Organization has practically eradicated yaws, a terribly disfiguring disease not unlike leprosy. Malaria and tuberculosis are two other great health problems which the co-operating agencies are still combating. Through the Artibonite Valley irrigation project of Point Four, increased production of rice (the staple starch in Haiti's diet) was made possible to the point where Haiti is almost self-sufficient and the price of rice has dropped considerably. But results in some other areas have not come up to expectations due to many complicated reasons. There is hope that these agencies may yet be able to complete successfully many projects begun

and continue to make a contribution of ever-increasing value to the development of Haiti.

Meanwhile the churches are doing what they can to relieve the suffering and misery due to poverty, even if it is only a stopgap measure. Almost every church has a charity fund to which the people contribute for taking care of the destitute and sick in the circle of the church. The trouble is that in some areas almost everyone in the church falls into this category. Church World Service makes U.S. surplus food available to us for distribution to such unfortunates, and sometimes that is all they have had to keep them alive, particularly during the recent drought and famine.

Since coming to Haiti, I have learned what that Negro spiritual means when it declares, "I've got shoes!" For thousands of people in Haiti don't have them—just the cheapest sandals. For them their only hope is that, "when I get to heaven, gonna put on my shoes," for in this life they have little more than the bare necessities. Clothes, and especially shoes, are about the most expensive items they have to buy.

The used clothing which has been so faithfully sent to Haiti has been a blessing to thousands of needy people. It has enabled dozens of couples to get married with less embarrassment and ridicule, and it has clothed hundreds of others who had literally nothing to wear but rags. If you who have sent used clothing were to visit here in Haiti, you might have the same joyful experience that we do occasionally when we recognize someone wearing some of our clothes.

But now let us look to one of the other reasons why Haiti is poor, and then let us see how the common people make their living. Haiti is a country that the industrial revolution passed by. There is no heavy industry in Haiti. The factories and other light industries that exist are so small and few in number that they exert little effect on the life of the nation.

Lacking industry, what does Haiti do for a living? The tourist "industry," coffee, sisal, and cotton traditionally bring in the most dollars. Sugar is likely to join these four with the recently increased U.S. quota. The tourist industry involves only a very small number of people in the cities. The production of sugar requires an agricultural base, utilizing a greater part of the area of the few small plains of Haiti. That, together with sisal, a fiber for making rope, are about the only agricultural industries using machinery for large-scale operations.

Coffee and cotton are not really agricultural products in Haiti. They are horticultural products, grown in small plots or "gardens" as they are called, tended by hand, harvested by the family, and sold to speculators who buy for themselves or export firms. They are usually grown on land so steep or rocky that modern "agricultural" methods could not be used. Most of the food that Haiti eats is also produced in gardens under these same conditions. It is estimated that Haiti is 90 per cent dependent upon agriculture and horticulture.

In order to live, almost every rural family and some city families must have gardens to produce at least a part of the food that they will eat. In favorable areas they grow rice in the plains and beans in the mountains, for rice and beans is the national dish of Haiti. This is what missionary children sometimes cry for when they return to the States on furlough! The Haitians also grow bananas, plantains (the cooking banana), corn, sweet potatoes, and several other varieties of starchy root vegetables. Around their houses they like to have avocado trees, mango and citrus fruit trees, as well as a little grove of coffeebushes where the altitude or humidity will permit. In areas where there is little rain and no irrigation, millet and congo beans can usually be grown successfully.

Land is the great problem of the Haitian peasant. He is fortunate if he has inherited some. His dream is

to increase his holdings. He will mortgage his property only when he is in the direst need, for he is almost sure to lose it if he does. The commonest rate of interest is 50 per cent per year, and 100 per cent is not rare. If someone owns no land, there are several alternatives open to him. He may rent or lease land, or sharecrop it for about half of the crop which goes to the owner.

There is a unique institution in Haitian rural culture which is similar to the American husking bee. It is called the *coumbite* (KOOM-beat). Someone has some work that he wants done in a hurry, such as clearing, planting, or weeding a field, harvesting a crop, or building a house. He calls in his friends and relatives to help him and he provides food and drink. He in turn is expected to respond to such a call from his friends and neighbors.

Usually some sort of rhythm is provided to keep the workers happy and to provide a signal for them to use their hoes or machetes in unison. This may be simply someone striking a piece of iron (a hoe or machete) with a stone, or perhaps also drums, or bamboo pipes, or all three. There is usually singing at least part of the time, with a clever leader who can ad-lib new verses either praising the good workers or ridiculing the lazy ones. The workers are sometimes divided into two or more groups which compete in getting the work done more quickly.

The polite thing to say when coming upon such a group working in a field is, "Why didn't you invite me?" And the standard reply is, "We didn't know you were coming."

We utilize this institution of the *coumbite* in getting much of our church work done. When we are building a church, the older ladies come to cook the food while the men and boys help with the actual construction and the children and younger women transport water, rocks, and sand in containers on their heads. Usually there is a lot of enthusiasm and singing, teasing and appraisal of

how work is done. And everyone is proud that he has had a part in the construction of the house of God.

After each harvest a certain amount is set aside and stored for family use and the rest is taken to the markets and sold. In addition to the formally established markets in town and country, there are "small markets" at almost every crossroads where two or more women will set out their wares for sale. In some sections, indeed, it seems like almost every house along the road has a table out in front of it with a few things for sale.

Each of the village or large country markets in a region is held on a different day so that the trading rotates from one place to another during the week. The weight of heavy loads of produce carried on the women's heads is not noticed too much, as they come down the mountain trails, for going to the market is a social event that is looked forward to. Almost all the buying and selling is done by women, with the exception of the animal market, which is almost altogether frequented by men.

There is no barter, usually, and no credit. The price is arrived at only after bargaining. The buyer declares that the produce is inferior or that the goods is worthless, but he sticks around and haggles long enough to get the price down to what he knows it should be.

The peasants from the countryside sell the produce from their own gardens, but the other women who make selling a profession tend to specialize in certain commodities, such as cloth, meat, baskets, or notions. There are also saleswomen who make a living by buying at wholesale prices and reselling in small retail quantities. They often make long trips into the country to get wares to sell in the cities and towns, or conversely bring wares from the city to sell in country markets.

At least once a year toward the end of one of the harvest seasons, most of the churches of Haiti hold a harvest festival when the people bring in a tithe or at

least an offering from their harvest. During the special services of this harvest festival, which usually lasts two days, there is an excellent opportunity for teaching our people the principles of stewardship and tithing.

During 1959 we had a year of special emphasis on tithing. We held tithing rallies where we taught the people our theme chorus, which was Mal. 3:10 sung to music I had written. The Bible school students presented skits explaining what the tithe is an how to compute it. There were testimonies from laymen as to how God had blessed them since they had begun tithing. The response was tremendous. We had an increase of 65 per cent over the previous year in the total giving of all the churches. Our people, in all their poverty, are beginning to learn that if they will seek God's kingdom first all other necessary things will be added to them.

CHAPTER 2

Liberty

The Slaves Who Freed Themselves

The student body president of our Nazarene Bible school, David Dorcee, was giving a chapel message on a subject that is always of interest to Haitians. " 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,' " he quoted from Gal. 5:1. After recounting the stories of valor of how his ancestors had fought to gain liberty, he brought in the spiritual application with a resounding climax. His whole congregation was with him to the last word, for David had struck the subject that is never far from the minds of the history-conscious Haitians.

Hard on the heels of the American and French revolutions, France's richest colony exploded into revolt. Out of the turmoil emerged the first Negro republic of modern times. On January 1, 1804, the dream of political independence and freedom from slavery became a reality for almost a half million slaves. From that moment liberty has been the most cherished ideal in Haiti.

But how did it all begin? How did the Africans get to this island in the New World? How did Spain, and France, and even the United States get into the picture?

It all started with Columbus. He discovered Haiti on December 6, 1492. He was sailing down its northern coast in search of fresh water when he wrecked the "Santa Maria" on a reef just outside the harbor of the present-day city of Cap Haitien (or Cape Haitian, as the English-speaking people often call it). The Indians from a nearby village helped unload the vessel and de-

posit its cargo safely on shore. From the timbers of the wrecked ship the sailors constructed a tower which they named *La Navidad* in honor of the soon-coming Christmas.

Columbus left thirty-eight men, the crew of the "Santa Maria," at this first white settlement in the New World and returned to Spain to report his findings. He called this island Hispaniola, or Little Spain. When he returned almost a year later, he found only a few decaying corpses. Probably because of the Spaniards' greed and brutal license the Indians had massacred the entire garrison.

Columbus started another settlement called Isabella on what is now the northern coast of the Dominican Republic on the other end of the island. Then later he founded the city of Santo Domingo on the south coast, which has become the modern capital of Dominican Republic, Ciudad Trujillo. The Arawak and Carib Indians were enslaved to work for the Spaniards. After sugar cane was imported from the Canary Islands in 1506, the Indians were practically exterminated. To replace the Indians who were dying off so rapidly, the slave trade to the New World was begun; and the first Negro slaves were introduced to the island in 1510.

Little gold was ever found in Hispaniola, and the Spaniards passed the struggling little colony by, for the most part, in search of quicker wealth on the mainland. It remained for the French to show what could be done with the resources of the island in their colony in the western third of the island.

It was really an international colony of pirates that gave the French their start in Haiti. French, English, and Dutch refugees from the Spanish, who controlled the Caribbean waters, settled on Tortuga, a small island off the northern coast of Haiti, about 1630. The English word buccaneers comes from the custom they adopted

from the Indians of roasting their meat over small open fires of green wood on spits called buccans.

Before long, settlements were started on the mainland and the stage was set for the French to challenge the power of Spain on the island. The Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 formally recognized the French right to the western section of the island, which had become a prosperous, growing colony by then.

The French called their colony Saint Domingue and built it into the richest colonial possession in the world by the time of the French Revolution. Sugar, coffee, cotton, indigo, molasses, dyewoods, and cocoa were exported to Europe in increasing quantities. But this flourishing economy was built upon the precarious base of the forced labor of 480,000 slaves as contrasted with 32,000 whites and 24,000 freedmen at the eve of the Haitian revolution.

The moral conditions of the colony were deplorable. The ideal of the French colonists was not to remain as settlers, but to make their fortunes and then return to France as soon as possible. Gambling, prostitution, and unbelievable cruelty flourished. The Roman Catholic priests themselves, far from being a moderating influence in the colony, were notoriously degenerate.

The population of the colony was also divided against itself. The Creoles (Frenchmen born in the colony) hated the French governor and bureaucrats that were sent over to govern them, and the blacks hated their cruel French masters. The prospering class of free mulattoes was despised and discriminated against by the less affluent middle-class Frenchmen.

Meanwhile revolution was brewing in France. The States-General convened in May, 1789, and formed the National Assembly in June. The Bastille was taken in July, and in August the all-important declaration of the rights of man was proclaimed. There was a strong movement for the abolition of slavery in all the French pos-

session. A group in France was formed, the friends of the Blacks, whose special interest was in regaining full political rights for the colored colonial freedmen.

Back in the colony of Saint Domingue (Haiti), the news of the revolution in France was received joyfully. But when the mulattoes tried to demand their regained rights, the whites firmly and brutally denied them. Two mulattoes, Oge and Chavanne, were executed for leading a demonstration in the capital city.

While tensions mounted and both whites and mulattoes knew they would have to make plans quickly in the struggle against each other, something happened that neither had calculated on. The slaves revolted.

The period from August 14, 1791, until January 1, 1804, was marked by great tumult and confusion. The historic uprising of the slaves, which was initiated at a voodoo ceremony the night of August 14, 1791, set off the revolutionary period. It was a confused struggle of France against England and Spain, of colonists against the mother country (France), of whites against mulattoes and blacks, and above all, a desperate fight for freedom from slavery by the blacks.

Out of this maelstrom of events rose three great revolutionary heroes, Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe, who have been compared with Caesar, Cromwell, Napoleon, and Washington in their leadership ability.

Toussaint l'Ouverture was the "opening" of freedom for his people (as his name implies) rather than the "closing," which helps to explain why he is not as highly honored in Haiti as Dessalines, who actually achieved independence and liberty after Toussaint died.

However, Toussaint was one of the greatest figures ever to come upon the stage of Haitian history. He was over thirty before he learned to read and write, but his brilliant leadership won the admiration of even his enemies.

When Napoleon came to power in France in 1799, he was furious because this black man had by then gained control of the colony. He sent his brother-in-law, General Leclerc, to Haiti in 1802 with 20,000 troops to retake the rebel colony in three swift stages. Historical evidence indicates that Leclerc had orders from Napoleon to proceed to Louisiana after subduing Haiti and there lay the grounds for the conquest of the United States. But General Leclerc's death due to yellow fever and the subsequent failure of the French to retake the colony forced Napoleon to change his plans. Instead, he sold Louisiana to the United States to get money for continuing his wars in Europe.

After Toussaint was betrayed by the French and sent to France to die, Dessalines became the Joshua to complete the conquest. "Liberty or Death" was the heading for all of his letters. Against almost insuperable odds the Haitians finally won their freedom from the French. Dessalines proclaimed independence in the town of Gonaives on January 1, 1804, and restored the original Indian name to the land, Haiti, which means "mountainous."

At the same time independence was proclaimed, Dessalines' generals declared him governor-general of Haiti for life. The next year he had himself crowned emperor in imitation of Napoleon. But the following year on October 17, 1806, he was killed by ambush near Port-au-Prince.

At this point in Haitian history the land became divided into a republic in the south and the State of Haiti in the north with Henry Christophe, one of the revolutionary generals, as president, then king until his death October 8, 1820, when he shot himself while his kingdom crumbled. His intense ambition to rebuild the country to its former economic prosperity resulted in a regime of tyranny. He built the magnificent palace of Sans Souci and the incomparable fortress, the Citadel,

on the summit of a mountain, both of which are among the greatest of Haiti's tourist attractions today.

After the death of Dessalines, the south was formed into the Republic of Haiti, which got off to a good start under its first president, Alexandre Petion, who had also been one of Dessalines' generals. He was lenient, and many refugees came from the stern rule of Christophe in the north to enjoy the freedom of the Republic in the south. Petion, a mulatto, favored the landowners. But he did parcel out state lands so that almost everyone could have his little plot of ground.

During the term of the second president, Jean Pierre Boyer, Christophe died in 1820, and the northern kingdom became a part of the Republic. In 1822, Boyer also united the eastern two-thirds of the island with the Republic. But he was driven out in 1843 from this eastern part, and in 1844 the Dominican Republic declared itself independent.

From that time on there was a rapid succession of presidents which established a pattern of political chaos that has dogged the history of Haiti down to the present. From the beginning of the Republic until 1915 (a period of 108 years), 24 executives held office. Seventeen of these were deposed by revolution. Only 2 were allowed to retire peaceably from office; only 8 presidents were able to stay in office for a period equal to their elected terms.

The ambition of those who were out of office to get in made them seize upon every mistake of the incumbent president and make it an issue for revolt and revolution. Revolution came to be seen as the only solution out of current difficulties, and even the more altruistic came to accept this political philosophy.

From 1915 to 1934 the U.S. Marines occupied Haiti. There is no question about the fact that Haiti's government had been in a state of anarchy, but it is doubtful that this was the principal reason for the occupation.

Certainly American financial interests in Haiti had a lot to do with it, as did also the fact that Germany was interested in establishing a military base in Haiti.

The occupation was a blow to the pride of the Haitians, who had governed themselves for 111 years. But the occupation did do a number of things for Haiti. All departments of the government were reorganized more efficiently. A public health service was organized, and a school for training agricultural teachers and agents was founded. Vocational education was begun, and roads were improved.

During this time there was business properity due to the free-flowing money from the 2,000 marines and their families. But the Haitians were not governing their own country. For once the Haitians united together—in opposition to the Americans—in their desire to be a completely free nation again. Franklin D. Roosevelt was highly lauded when the occupation troups were withdrawn during his first term of office, and President Vincent of Haiti called himself Haiti's "second liberator."

Since the occupation there have been revolutions, but mild ones. Progress has been made in many areas of the national life, and there seems to be a gradual development toward stability. Haiti's constitution provides for a democratic form of government. There is an increasing awareness of the responsibility of the nation to improve the lot of the majority of Haiti's masses, who are desperately poor and without opportunity.

Onto this scene the evangelical church has come, emerging in the past few years with an almost explosive growth from a dormant life within the nation since 1816. Up to the present the Protestant church has been much too small to have a discernible influence in the history of Haiti. But now it has grown to nearly 15 per cent of the population and its voice will be increasingly heard.

The great desire in the hearts of the Haitian Christians is "Haiti for Christ" and "Christ for Haiti," as they

often express it. True conversion makes the Haitian people even more patriotic and eager for all Haitians to have a chance to know the blessings of God's grace. Where before they were converted they may have been provincial or even selfish in their outlook, upon finding Christ as their Saviour they become concerned for those about them. They want to see the gospel established in close-by villages and in faraway towns, and they develop a national consciousness which they never had before. They pray for the president and other leaders of the land.

They know that the revolution that Haiti needs is not a political one. It is the change of heart and life that happens when one receives Christ. For such a spiritual revolution throughout Haiti, thousands of earnest Haitian Christians are working and praying. When it comes as a mighty revival, they know that it will bring God's blessings upon Haiti in a way it has never known before and help their beloved country to realize its destiny among the nations. Will you join with us in praying for this revival?

CHAPTER 3

Peasants

A Medieval Society in a Modern World

We had not been long in Haiti when we realized that there were definitely at least two kind of people—some sort of upper class, and some sort of lower class. This was entirely different from the relatively classless society in which we had grown up in the United States, and we had to learn how to understand it.

The upper class in Haiti is called *the elite* or *the "bourgeoisie."* It constitutes about 5 per cent of the population, and since the beginning of the American occupation it has more or less controlled both the economy and politics of the nation.

There are several ways that the elite can be readily distinguished. First of all, they are educated and speak French in contrast to the lower class people, who speak only Creole. All education in Haiti is given in French.

The elite also do not usually work with their hands. Their financial status and standard of living are much higher than those of the masses. Etiquette is strictly observed and French culture is highly revered. The skin color tends to be light, and light-skinned mates are preferred. The elite live in the towns and cities, preferably Port-au-Prince. They are usually nominal Catholics or agnostics, and at least give the impression to strangers that they consider voodoo a vulgar superstition of the masses. Formal marriage is required, though the keeping of mistresses is not uncommon.

Considering these generalized characteristics of the elite, it is very difficult for someone from the lower class

to break through the barrier. When this is done, it is usually accomplished through emminence in the military, politics, finances, scholarship, or the arts. But it is still difficult.

In Port-au-Prince, the elite live in the upper part of the city in large houses surrounded by gardens. They have servants and lead an active social life. They are charming and gracious as hosts, and are well educated in the arts. Their "heaven" is Paris, where they can vacation or live without fear of discrimination.

Many of the young people have also learned English well for business purposes or to pursue advanced studies in the United States, and some of them are quite Americanized. Many of the doctors have taken their specialties in the States.

The attitude of the elite toward the masses is at best paternal, but often it takes the form of contempt and condescension. There are some of the elite, particularly among the doctors, who have a genuine interest and concern for the plight of the masses and try to help them in different ways. But in general the elite live as if the masses did not exist or else exist for their benefit. They feel that their culture is the true Haitian culture.

The elite are not usually very receptive to the gospel. They are highly sophisticated, self-sufficient, and do not feel that they need it—though they often praise the work of the evangelical churches in evangelizing and elevating the masses. Socially, to become a true Christian for them means becoming a sort of outcast from their class. But to be fair to the elite, I must say that the general presentation of the gospel in Haiti has been directed almost exclusively to the masses, and the elite have had little opportunity to come into contact with the full impact of the gospel. Some of them have at times chided us missionaries for neglecting them and not making an approach to the cultured and educated on their level.

There is a very small "Protestant elite" which has developed in the larger Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopal churches. Elsewhere, Christians of the elite often hold positions of leadership and responsibility in their churches, but with the exception of a few individuals their impact on their class is negligible. As is to be expected, many of the second- or third-generation young people have become nominal Protestants only, and have lost their Christian standards to those of the worldly groups with whom they socialize.

In contrast, *the masses,* or *peasants* as they are called, for the most part are completely illiterate, speaking only Creole, completely cut off from the rest of the civilized world. They are black-skinned and most of them live outside the cities. Their standard of living is very low. The majority of those who are not Protestants are not legally married to their mates, and they practice voodoo with no compunctions while still considering themselves good Catholics.

The attitude of the masses toward the light-skinned elite is mixed. On the one hand there is the reaction of distrust, hate, and fear—in general, the feeling that the elite are interlopers and not Haitians at all. Yet at the same time the peasants envy them and usually show them a great amount of respect and even admiration.

It is the peasants who are the most responsive to the gospel, and they constitute close to 100 per cent of the Protestant church in Haiti. The Protestant missions have had an almost unbelievable success with the masses, such that at present there are about 400,000 Protestants in Haiti, which is probably nearly 15 per cent of the total population. In the past twenty-five years, the Haitian Protestant community has been the fastest growing Protestant community in the world. We will give more details about the Haitian church in chapter six.

There is one class which has not been mentioned up to now, and that is *the middle class.* Before the

second world war it hardly existed, but since then it has been rapidly growing in numbers and importance in the cities. It is composed of French-speaking, fairly well educated people who have risen from the peasant class but have not yet attained enough of the other elite attributes to break through. They are the "city cousins" of the peasants, and although they are sometimes better off, they are not yet financially able to enjoy the life they have been educated to. They are awakened to the possibilities of life, and they are clamoring for a chance. They are united with the masses in their distrust of the elite, and they consider themselves the natural leaders of the peasants. It is in the middle class that most future changes are likely to start. There are no statistics available on how large this group is, but it is probably much bigger than the elite.

Religiously, the middle class tend to be disillusioned with Catholicism, and they are often caught up in free thinking and sometimes communism. They have not yet freed themselves from the influence of voodoo, but their direction is somewhat away from it. Regarding Protestantism, in general they think it is a good thing, but not for them. That is not to say that there are not many middle-class people in the city churches. But as a class they are determined to make their own way. Protestantism has yet to become a middle-class movement in the cities in the way it is a movement among the masses in both city and country.

The nature of the social structure of Haiti presents a special problem to the churches. First of all, the difference between the extreme groups, especially in languages (elite and middle class speaking French and the peasants Creole only), make it almost necessary to have separate churches or at least separate approaches if one or the other of the groups is not to be ignored or offended.

If the services, are in French, the peasants cannot understand; if they are in Creole, for the most part the

elite and middle class will not attend. Actually a compromise has resulted in some of the city churches. The Sunday morning service is in French, and the Sunday evening and other weekly services are in Creole. Most of the churches of Haiti, however, have services only in Creole, and thus reach only the masses.

For a number of years now the Lord has given us a vision for starting a second church in Port-au-Prince directed toward the middle class and elite, and particularly toward winning some of the thousands of students who attend the high schools and colleges of the capital. Up to the present we have been hindered from beginning such a work because of other pressing duties, but we are trusting the Lord to open the door for this witness soon. The results of such a church would not only be the salvation of those won for Christ but also the finding of well-prepared young people whom God could call to be leaders in the Haitian church.

Now let us take a look at what life is like for the masses. First of all, we must note that a small part of them live in cities and towns. They are Haiti's most-to-be-pitied people, and yet their numbers are rapidly increasing every year. They live in slums, without sanitation or water, which they must fight to get from public fountains (which run only certain hours), private faucets (where they may buy it), or from broken mains or pipes. They live in shacks crowded together in slums, rarely with more than one room to a family. They rent their land, house, or room. If they are not artisans, they must work for wages in a precarious world in which regular jobs are all but impossible to get. There is no place for a garden, and they have to buy all their food at the higher city prices.

Yet many of these, through native ability and hard work, manage to pull themselves up on the financial scale, send their children to school, and eventually become members of the middle class. However, there is a Haitian

proverb which says that it is just four generations from the country to town and back again.

For the majority of the masses who live in the country (these are the true "peasants"), life can be a little better in some ways. Though one may not have the much-desired corrugated iron roof, nor a wooden floor, he can usually manage to live in surroundings that are much more pleasant and clean. He has his garden and some fruit trees, so he can raise most of the food that he eats.

The average Haitian country house is set just off the road or trail in the midst of a garden. It is well suited to the needs and resources of the region and people. The framework of the house is made from posts that can be cut from the overgrown wooded sections that dot the countryside. The posts are buried in the ground about three feet apart, and the framework and rafters are joined by wooden dowels or sometimes even tied in place by the specially strong vines which are used to make fences. However, the use of nails and spikes is rapidly becoming more commonplace near the cities and in the plains, where commerce is more developed than in the mountains.

The three-foot space between the poles is then filled in with woven twigs to form the walls. After this wattling is plastered with mud it is often whitewashed to help preserve it against the driving rains. The floor is usually of packed earth, though cement or stone floors are desired where they can be afforded. The roof is covered with straw thatch and with its steep pitch gives ample protection against the rains when it is new. However, it has to be re-covered every few years as the straw deteriorates. There is a Haitian proverb which says that a leaky roof can fool the sun but it can't fool the rain. The house itself lasts only for a maximum of about ten years, as the termites soon hollow out the poles and wooden doors and windows.

As to form, the average house has two rooms. The rooms are rarely larger than ten feet square and have one small window. One room is used as the bedroom and the other room as a parlor-dining room. If there is a porch, the attic space above it is used for storage. Sometimes a special storage house is built up on stilts to store the grains and other food which can be kept.

The house is not usually lived in much during the day. Most daytime activities around the house take place in the shade of a brush arbor extending out in front of the house, which serves as a "family room." There is ordinarily also a small cooking shack just a little way away from the house.

The word "family" as it is used in Haiti has a broad meaning. It is the extended family including not only the mother, father, and children, but also a wide range of relatives on both sides of the house. For this reason the Haitian child is often much more closely attached to his grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins than is the case in the States and Europe.

The ideal is for all this "family" of three or more generations to live together with their houses in the same courtyard surrounded by their gardens on the ancestral land. Though this pattern is breaking down, it is still the rule rather than the exception in rural areas. The oldest man, or sometimes woman, is the leader of the family and is treated with respect and obedience by all the members of the family.

The outstanding advantage of belonging to this extended family group is the right to call on the group for aid when it is needed. This includes participation in horticultural and housebuilding "bees," borrowing tools or animals, and financial help on such occasions as weddings, dances, first Communion, voodoo ceremonies, funerals, and other expensive events. If one does not abide by the decisions of the head of the family or the elders, the possibility of help from the family in time of need

is jeopardized. In extreme cases of disobedience, the offending member may even be persecuted, beaten, or driven away from his house and family.

Such is the case sometimes when someone becomes converted. At first the family try to intimidate him to get him to give up his faith in Christ. They will often say that the voodoo spirits are angry with the entire family because of him and unless he returns to serving the gods they will all suffer. If he persists in his Christian profession in spite of their threats, they may drive him from his home or make an attempt on his life by poisoning or sorcery. This is particularly true in the case of the first Christian in a patriarchal village. Once the family group has tolerated the presence of one Christian, the barrier has been broken down and the family will usually then protest no more violently than to boycott the new Christian family or individual by denying him the expected help and co-operation or by refusing for a time to sell him food and other necessities.

Fear of this family reprisal sometimes causes some conversions to seem more casual than they ought to be. Someone may hear the gospel by preaching or personal testimony and express a desire to become a Christian. But before he will declare his final decision he asks to go home and talk it over with the family. Many times if the family is completely opposed the individual will bow to their wishes but retain a decision in his heart to become an open disciple at the first opportunity in the future. Sometimes he will take his stand against their wishes and live heroically for Christ in scorn of the consequences. In a case like this the church must take the place of the extended family for the new convert and provide the same functions of help and security.

Sometimes after consultation, the whole family will decide to become converted and send for the preacher to come and "convert" them. This is not unlike the case of the Philippian jailer whom Paul told to "believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). It is most probable that not all of the members have been truly converted, but at least it has become a Christian household through the decision of the parents.

Conversion has two meanings in Haiti. In addition to the Biblical idea of an inner experience of regeneration there is the popular idea which links it mostly with the outward signs of change. The people have known only formal religion, and some suppose that compliance with the visible form will achieve the desired results. For this reason many people call the preacher to come to their house to burn their voodoo paraphernalia and become converted in the second sense. Then later as they begin to attend the church and learn what true spiritual conversion is, they put their faith in Christ and their hearts are changed.

Haiti is a man's world. Legally, a woman is always a minor. By law and custom she is expected to obey her husband. It is not uncommon for a husband to beat his wife for insubordination, and the whole community approves (at least the men).

In practice, the woman often makes the decisions and acts as the treasurer of the family because of her knowledge gained in trading contacts. It is the duty of the man to provide food for his family, but the wife takes the surplus from the gardens to market and sells it, using the money to buy clothing and other things that are needed for the family.

In the past the parents usually decided who would marry whom, and this practice still persists to some measure. However, more and more the young people are making that decision for themselves, but usually subject to the approval of their elders.

In this area the Church has a big ministry to perform among the young people. There seems to be little concern in Haitian culture for making a choice in mar-

riage on the basis of suitable temperament and disposition. For one thing, the Haitian concept of the superiority of the man often does not permit the prospective husband to think of his fiancée in terms of companionship but rather of utility. He figures that unless she is particularly bad he can handle her by force if necessary. While genuine love does exist sometimes between husband and wife, it is not too often the initial basis of matrimony.

Most Haitian families are formed without the benefit of either civil or religious marriage, in accordance with an institution known as *placage* (pla-SAHZH). This is a mutual consent agreement not too different from the "common-law" relation of Western civilization. It is dissolved just as easily as it is begun, by mutual consent. While promiscuity is frowned upon by the parents as far as their daughters are concerned, it is tolerated in the young men. And unions (either marriage or common-law) are often not decided upon until after the girl is expecting a child. This is the meaning of the Haitian saying: "They celebrated Easter before Good Friday." There is one more reason beside promiscuity for this. All Haitians want to have children, and many young men do not want to be committed to a girl until they are sure she can bear them children.

But why is it that most Haitian couples are not legally married? The most common reason given is that it is too expensive. For Roman Catholics, the church wedding (and there can be no other kind of marriage for them) involves, first of all, payment for all the services rendered in connection with the church. The difference between a first-, second-, or third-class wedding is in the elaborateness (candles, bells, altar boys), and one pays accordingly, of course.

For both Protestants and Catholics, social custom demands that the couple make at least a partial preparation in the nature of new clothes, furniture (if they did not have any before), and preferably a new house or at

least some fixing up. Then after the wedding there must always be a reception at the home of the couple with food and drink for all comers.

The cost of all this is almost prohibitive in a culture where the standard of living is already at an incompressible level for most of the people. Consequently most couples start living together with the hope of saving and someday getting married. That day seldom arrives, if at all, until they have grandchildren who can serve as attendants in the ceremony. We have performed double weddings in which the young people and the groom's or bride's parents were married at the same time. We have also married elderly couples in the presence of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

There is another reason given for not marrying which comes out of the peculiar situation of marital relations in Haiti. The husband will often protest that he loves his wife, and she has been a good wife and faithful to him for many years—but if they get legally married it may go to her head and ruin their happy home. For the legally married wife has certain legal rights that the common-law wife does not, and upon suddenly acquiring these rights some Haitian women do become demanding and domineering because the husband's responsibility cannot be easily and quickly dissolved. Divorce is relatively expensive and seldom resorted to by the peasants for this reason.

The problem of the churches in this area of family life is not an easy one. In winning people to Christ, conversion is the first step. The next step is getting the converts married. All the Protestant churches insist that those living in common-law relationship be married before they can be baptized or before their babies can be dedicated in church.

An amusing incident happened to a Baptist missionary who was rightly zealous in holding up the moral standard of the church. Two babies were brought for-

ward to be dedicated, each held by a different woman. When the missionary asked who the father of each baby was, the two women indicated the same man. The missionary was highly indignant and launched into an exhortation on the sinfulness of adultery, until the Haitian preacher found courage to interrupt the missionary and explain that the two babies were twins, one held by the mother and the other held by the aunt.

However, in many cases such suspicions are justified. Not too long ago a young man near our headquarters was converted and shortly afterward became the father of three children by three different girls all in the same month. His mother, who did not become converted, did not want him to marry any of the girls. When he decided to marry one of them anyway (the prettiest!), his mother refused to attend the wedding and would not speak to the girl for many months afterward. However, the changed Christian character of this girl finally won the mother and family over, at least in part.

In preaching and teaching we emphasize that one must bring his whole life into conformity to the will of God and present an irreproachable witness to the world, and that includes getting married, in the case of a common-law couple. We try to help our people feel that it is better to obey God than men, to get married with simple, inexpensive preparations and ignore what the world may say about their wedding being cheap or stingy.

However, the local churches often do help out some of the poorer couples by providing the refreshments for the reception. The preachers save much of the used clothing, which we receive from the States, for such weddings. In this way they serve as a double blessing. We also plan multiple weddings when possible. Recently I married eleven couples in one service on a Saturday and baptized twenty-eight persons the next Sunday morning.

Some time ago the pastor of our Avenue Dessalines Church in Port-au-Prince, Joseph Simon, started some-

thing which has spread to many of our other churches. As soon as a new couple are converted, he tries to get them to set a marriage date *by faith.* Then they start attending the baptismal candidates' class immediately, so that they can be baptized at the first opportunity after they are married. So far a very high percentage of these weddings have come off. The Lord has helped the couples in one way or another to make the minimum preparations necessary, and these couples are always so thankful that they decided to get married "by faith." This decision is also often the first of a series which leads them into a life of holiness and makes them radiant witnesses and workers for the Lord.

CHAPTER 4

Literacy

From Darkness to Light

High up in a remote mountain valley back of Port-au-Prince, a Haitian Baptist preacher came across a voodoo priest who was mystifying a crowd of peasants by scribbling on a scrap of paper with a stub of a pencil. One glance at the paper told Victor, who was just barely literate himself, that this was not real writing.

Victor took the pencil and paper out of the voodoo priest's hands and laboriously wrote out his name while the crowd watched breathlessly. When the *i* was dotted and the *t* crossed, the voodoo priest ceremoniously shook the hand of the Baptist preacher and solemnly stated, "Today I have met an educated man!"

Well-educated men *are* to be found in Haiti—such as Dr. Jean Price-Mars, who is known internationally for his scholarly studies in philosophy and anthropology. But the tragedy of Haiti is that the educated class is so small and that the gap is so large between it and the peasants, who are almost wholly without schooling.

Estimates of the illiteracy rate in Haiti run from 80 to 90 per cent. If true readers, who read with any degree of comprehension, are meant, I would say that there are probably less than 10 per cent of them in the total population. For so many of the children have gone to school for a number of years and have learned how to "read" French (that is, to sound it out) without understanding it.

Sometimes illiteracy is somewhat of a blessing in disguise. I was holding a Communion service one Sun-

day morning. When I lifted the cloth that was covering the elements I saw that they were on a bright, new tin tray. But as the communicants gradually emptied the tray, my curiosity crystallized into muted horror when I saw that the brightly colored characters on the bottom of the tray spelled out, "Chevalier Worthy Beer"! However, no one in the congregation could have read it, and the semi-literate preacher had been interested only in finding a tray which was the right size and shape.

Illiteracy is the biggest enemy of future progress in Haiti. It is one reason why modern industry cannot be rapidly developed. Because the peasants have no avenue to knowledge and information through the printed page, they are doomed to continue using traditional unproductive farming methods rather than learn the techniques which modern science has put at the disposal of educated farmers in other countries. It keeps the peasants at the mercy of unscrupulous rascals who find means of legally stealing their property or burdening them down with debts which they cannot pay. It dooms the vast majority of Haiti's masses to a drab existence in a twilight land of ignorance, fear, and superstition.

Illiteracy also takes a dreadful toll in the Church. Many a country station has no one who can read or write. In visiting one mountain church with a fairly large membership, I wondered why the church treasurer had an eight-year-old boy writing down the attendance and offering in the church record book. Then I realized that he was home from school for the week end and that he was the only person in the community who could read and write.

The greatest tragedy for the Christians in being illiterate is that they cannot read and study God's Word for themselves but must depend upon a secondhand course, often from one who is only a semi-literate himself. In spite of this, it is amazing how rapidly the Haitians can memorize scripture verses, and recall them at

appropriate occasions. But the Haitian church can never be firmly established and strong until a majority of its members are literate. And that is exactly our goal.

However, let no one think that being illiterate in itself means that one will be inevitably stupid or low in intelligence. Some of the keenest minds I have ever reasoned with have been minds of illiterate Haitian peasants. When it comes to interpersonal relations, some could outdo Dale Carnegie. Others have managed to become rich through their cleverness.

Spiritually, illiteracy does not prevent the development of Christian character. Some of God's true saints are found among the illiterate Haitian Christians. The question is, How much more could they have done for the Lord if they had been literate? In general, illiteracy stunts the development of the individual and limits his capacity in a most pitiful way.

There are two main things which contribute to the problem of illiteracy in Haiti. One is the shortage of schools and consequent lack of opportunity for Haiti's children to get an education. The government is building new schools as fast as money is available. The evangelical churches are doing all they can to correct this situation. It is partly in self-defense. There is room for only one child out of five in the present schools. And these government schools are run by the Catholics, who often try to force Protestant children to become Catholics. A majority of the local Protestant churches have a grammar school, and several of the missions have high schools in the larger cities of Haiti.

The second problem which contributes to illiteracy is more complex—the two-language system of the country. French is the official language of Haiti, but only the few who have been to school can speak it and use it. The real language of Haiti which everyone speaks is Haitian Creole. This fact makes it imperative that every missionary learn both languages.

Creole is not a dialect of French, as is often stated, but an independent language which the famous Cornell University linguist, Robert Hall, Jr., states is as far removed from French as modern Italian is from Latin. Creole speakers cannot understand modern French, which is spoken mostly in the cities, and strangers who speak only French cannot understand Creole except for some of the common vocabulary in both languages.

Some elite Haitians pretend not to know Creole, but if they didn't they couldn't talk with their servants. The truth is that while elite parents may speak only French to their children, so that they will grow up speaking French, they almost universally prefer Creole in animated, friendly conversation. The sentence or paragraph may begin in French, but it will almost certainly end up in Creole unless there is some special reason for it not to.

The use of the two languages by the bilingual upper classes is most interesting. French must be used in all formal public situations, speeches, receptions, when speaking to superiors, foreigners, or strangers, when meeting someone for the first time, at the beginning of a conversation, or when one is likely to be overheard—in short, whenever it is necessary to prove that one is educated and cultured. However, the Creole-speaking foreigner in Haiti will know that he has been accepted when his Haitian acquaintances abandon French for Creole after the initial niceties in French are over. But his Haitian friends do want him to be able to speak French when the occasion demands it.

Haitian Creole is a rich language capable of subtle expression. While it draws the greatest part of its vocabulary from French (some also from English and Spanish), its grammar and forms of expression come from the languages of West Africa where the Haitian slaves came from.

Also a part of the rich African heritage is the folklore of Haiti. Because the language of the peasant culture of Haiti is Creole, until the last few years all Creole literature was oral literature, consisting of proverbs, riddles, and folk stories.

The proverbs give a strong African flavor to Haitian life, and they are referred to constantly in everyday speech. They account for a large part of the idiomatic structure of Creole and are important also in the transmission of Haitian wisdom and morals to the children.

Recently a visiting speaker thought he had given his interpreter something hard to translate when he referred to Khrushchev's comparison, "when shrimp learn to whistle." But his well-educated, enterprising Haitian interpreter responded immediately with an equivalent from a Haitian proverb: "When you can make a snake sit on a bench at school."

Several of the missionaries have made collections of hundreds of Haitian proverbs, and I am constantly hearing new ones to add to my own file. They often "ring the bell" as illustrations in preaching as nothing else could. Here are a few that easily translate into our language and culture:

When a snake has learned how to read, he's a lawyer.

Just because a dog has four feet doesn't mean he can go four ways at once.

It's in walking that you see, in sitting that you hear.

You can't put shoes on a crab's foot.

If the fire isn't lit, the potatoes won't be cooked.

A cockroach is never in the right when it's around a chicken.

It is the shoes that know if the socks have holes.

Being stupid will not kill you, but it will make you sweat a lot.

In keeping with the African heritage of indirection in speech, a proverb is often referred to when a direct statement must be avoided.

Riddles are popular as entertainment among both peasant and elite in Haiti. Here are a few samples:

He's very small, but he wakes up the president from his sleep: a bedbug.

Pass this way, pass that way, we'll meet: a belt.

Water lying down: a melon.

Water standing up: sugar cane.

Something to drink, something to eat, something to throw away: a coconut.

After the first of the riddle is told, if one does not know the answer soon, the riddle teller asks, "Do you drink it?" ("Give up?") If one cannot think of the answer, the reply is given, "I drink it." ("I give up.") Then the answer is given, to the delight of the riddle teller.

Folk stories are highly developed in Haiti. The subject matter covers many different areas, but perhaps the best known and most liked stories are the Bouqui (BOO-key) and Malice (mah-LEASE) series, which correspond to the Anasi and the Tiger stories of Africa and the Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox stories of the American Negroes. Malice is the smart one who is always playing tricks on poor, stupid Bouqui.

The Haitians are extremely dramatic when they tell folk tales, and listeners are never lacking nor are they bored. Folk stories are frequently used by Haitian preachers as illustrations in sermons, and the missionary who learns some of them and retells them can find no quicker way of establishing contact with the people.

As delightful as the Creole oral literature is, it is a very small world and limits the illiterate Haitian

peasant to his own confining culture. The bilingual upper classes may shut him out at will just by switching from Creole to French.

What can be done to help liberate the masses of Haiti from this benighted condition?

Something can be done, and something is being done. First of all, the government is now well aware of the problem and has launched a widespread program of literacy centers, often utilizing the facilities of the churches. In co-operation with the government's new emphasis on Creole literacy for adults, a Protestant Committee for Literacy and Literature has produced primers and readers which are now in the hands of the various co-operating missions and churches. Already hundreds of new readers have crossed the frontier into the world of reading, and many thousands will follow them within the next few months and years. A whole library of Christian literature is in the planning stage as well as a book to help the new Creole reader learn French. A new day is dawning for the evangelical churches, and with them for all of Haiti.

For some years several of the missions have been producing literature in Creole: Sunday school quarterlies, catechisms, songbooks, and other booklets. An Irish Methodist missionary, H. Ormonde McConnell, was an early pioneer in these endeavors. But the long battle over what system of spelling was to be used brought most of the early efforts to a relative standstill.

Now with the formation of the Protestant Committee, a majority of the Protestant churches are united for the first time in an all-out effort to win the literacy battle. Lit-Lit of New York (World Literacy and Christian Literature) heard about what was happening in Haiti and offered their help. They sent a missionary literacy expert from Africa to help the committee work out its primer in Creole. Later they sent a team of professional writing teachers to hold a three-week writ-

ers' conference, which trained twenty-seven Haitians and missionaries for the future work of producing Christian literature in French and Creole. Three of our preachers attended. Lit-Lit is continuing to help provide finances and encouragement to ensure the follow-through of the literacy program in Haiti.

Perhaps the biggest blessing to the Haitian Christians along this line is the completion of the long-awaited Creole New Testament and Psalms, which arrived in Haiti in late summer of 1960. The first edition of 10,000 was not nearly enough for the demand, and the American Bible Society is reprinting it in quantities which will assure that every new literate will be able to buy one of his own just as soon as he has learned to read.

Imagine being able to read God's Word by yourself for the first time! This is the joyful experience of many hundreds of formerly illiterate Haitian peasants. And how they love the Book! It is thrilling to arrive early for a church service and hear the new literates reading aloud to an intent group of early-comers who crowd in close to catch each word of God's message to them in their own language.

CHAPTER 5

Voodoo

The World of the Supernatural

"Do they really have zombis in Haiti?" many people have asked us. "And what's this we hear about them sticking pins into dolls to kill people and the wild dancing to the voodoo drums?"

Almost every Saturday night one can hear the throb of the drums in Haiti, and some sorcerers do actually stick pins into dolls in an effort to inflict pain or death on real people. And zombis—we will take a look at that later. However, as much as these things are perhaps a part of voodoo in the largest sense, voodoo is much more than that. It is the all-pervading religion of the peasants of Haiti.

Contrary to what some educated Haitians want the world to think, voodoo is not just "folklore" or peasants amusing themselves at a Saturday night dance. It is a real religion with mysterious rites, a priestly hierarchy, organized followers, places of worship, sacred objects and shrines, and a highly developed oral tradition. It is derived from African religious beliefs, Catholic rituals, and medieval witchcraft from provinces of France.

The belief system of voodoo is centered around three groups of beings: a large number of gods or spirits called *loas* (low-AH); the dead, especially relatives and ancestors; the spirits of the Twins or multiple births called *marassa* (mah-RAH-sah). All three of these groups of supernatural beings must be kept happy by prescribed ceremonies and rites if evil is to be avoided or good to be gained from them.

To the Haitian peasant the supernatural world is as real as the physical world in which he lives. The *loas*, the dead, and the *marassa* are everywhere about him and it is the Catholic God who is far off and too distant to be of any practical value in the everyday affairs of this life. Besides, the *loas* and other sacred beings are too powerful to be ignored.

The success of voodoo in Haiti is due to the fact that it is a practical religion, useful primarily for getting desired results, according to the belief of its followers. They believe that their gods can protect them, tell them things they need to know, bring healing when they are sick, make them successful in their enterprises. But for this help the spirits demand a price—they must be served and their desires obeyed.

Before we came to Haiti the first time, a well-educated lawyer asked me why I wanted to be a missionary and go to a foreign land to disturb the people who were happy and already satisfied in their own religion. I wish this lawyer could now meet "Joe" and hear his story about how much "happiness" he found in voodoo.

Joe was a voodoo priest who served the gods for many years. But one day, according to his testimony, the spirits got angry and gave him a terrible tropical ulcer. In vain he sought to propitiate the *loas* and find healing—he, a voodoo priest! He tried twenty-one different natural and supernatural remedies, but all this time his stinking sore continued to enlarge on his leg until he was scarcely able to walk. Then he decided to get converted and try Christ's way.

The first morning I saw Joe, the pastor of our "college church" preached the shortest sermon I've ever heard. From the moment that Joe had entered the church just before the sermon the overpowering odor from his ulcer penetrated to the farthest corners of the chapel and was all but impossible to stand. During the reading of the text, the wise pastor realized what was happening,

skipped the introduction and main points, and raced through the conclusion and benediction all in one breath.

Outside on the porch of the church we found out what was the matter. Brother Harry Rich and his wife took a special interest in the case. They lost no time in getting Joe to a doctor, but it was too late. Cancer. Joe's leg had to be amputated. But Joe had already found the greatest discovery of his life—Christ, as his own Saviour. When the doctor asked him why he had not come sooner for medical aid, Joe replied softly that this had all happened when he was in darkness—now he had come into the light. No one has a bigger smile nor a more radiant testimony of thankfulness to God than Joe as he hobbles around with his crutch and one good leg trying to find work at his profession as tinsmith.

The one word that most fully characterizes voodoo is "fear." The people feel they must "serve" the spirits, or evil and disaster will befall them; and whenever sickness or tragedy comes, the usual explanation is that the spirits or other supernatural beings have been offended. The power that the voodoo priest exercises over the people is almost unimaginable, for they will literally give him all they have if he requires it as necessary to secure the favor of the voodoo deities.

No one can be more lacking in pity than a voodoo priest who demands full payment before he will try to save the life of a loved one who is dying. As the mediator between the people and the supernatural beings, he holds the power of life and death over his followers. One of the most common testimonies of converts is that Christ has delivered them from fear of the *loas* and from the domination of the voodoo priest. Indeed the Christians do not believe that someone is truly converted until he is unafraid of these powers of darkness.

"One must be a Catholic to practice voodoo," is a statement which one will hear in one form or another many times in Haiti. This may be shocking to American

Catholics, but it is no problem for the Haitians. They are practical and want to keep on the good side of all the powers that be, and they find Catholicism "useful" for this purpose. Roman Catholic priests themselves have admitted that, rather than Christianizing voodoo, the Roman Catholic church in Haiti has been captured by voodoo and employed for its own purposes.

Catholicism may be the official religion of Haiti but it is certainly not the real religion. A Haitian proverb has it that Haiti is 90 per cent Catholic but 100 per cent voodoo. Aside from the recent spectacular advances of Protestantism, this comes close to being true. For even the elite are not exempt from the "superstitious" beliefs of their servants and often call in the help of a voodoo priest when they are sick, especially if Western medicine has failed to help them.

Only Protestantism has kept itself distinct and completely separate from voodoo. This is witnessed to by the voodoo priests themselves. We have had many converts who have come to us on the recommendation of voodoo priests! When the priests have had a difficult case (usually of sickness or repeated catastrophe) and they have been unable to gain the favor of the voodoo gods, they have prescribed becoming a Protestant as the only way to escape punishment by the voodoo spirits. Everyone—Protestant, Catholic, or voodooist—believes that a true Protestant believer is beyond the power of the voodoo priest or of the spirits who give him his power.

The African and Roman Catholic elements are so blended in voodoo that it is often difficult to tell where one begins and the other ends. Early Catholic missionaries identified the saints with the voodoo spirits in an effort to absorb voodoo, but the actual result is that the saints were taken on by voodoo, either as new gods to the voodoo pantheon or equated with existing voodoo spirits whose personalities they resembled. The saints' pictures are used in Haiti primarily to represent the

corresponding voodoo deities and are so employed in voodoo temples and in private homes. Thus Catholicism in general is serving the ends of voodoo.

By contrast, the mere presence of a Protestant pastor, preacher, or even a simple believer is usually considered to be enough to hinder the efficacy of many voodoo rites or make them completely impossible to perform. In the presence of such persons the voodoo spirits are often not pleased to manifest themselves in possessions, but when they do they often speak directly to the Christian through the person possessed and argue their right to do their work. The voodoo gods always act in opposition to true believers, and everyone knows that a strong Christian through faith and prayer can cast out the spirits through the power of God. Our preachers are called upon to do this constantly.

Voodoo started among the slaves in the French colony at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In a sense it had existed before this in the form of the religious beliefs transplanted from West Africa with the slaves. But it emerged at that time as a distinctive Haitian adaptation and began to take its present form.

At the end of the eighteenth century when the idea of a slave revolt began to form, it found a ready-made organizational rallying point in voodoo. It was not so much that voodoo produced the revolution—it was not a real messianic movement—but the leaders with revolt in mind used voodoo to promote their own purposes. Then after the revolution had succeeded in bringing f r e e d o m and independence, the black rulers ruthlessly suppressed the practice of voodoo, since they knew its value as an instrument for organizing insurrection.

Since Haiti has been a republic, the attitude of the rulers has varied at times from out-and-out public support and participation to inquisition-like efforts to stamp it out. From time to time the Roman Catholic church, which is the state church of Haiti, has organized "anti-

superstition" campaigns. But these have largely failed for lack of a vital, spiritual religion to replace voodoo.

There are some sections of Haiti, however, where voodoo has practically disappeared due to the local success of the Protestant churches. In at least one case so many voodoo priests and followers were converted in the Baptist and Nazarene churches in one community that the local Catholic chapel was emptied of its former voodoo-practicing communicants and the priest was obliged to move to another community where he could find a flock big enough to minister to. We do not wish to pretend that there are no Protestant backsliders who return to the practice of voodoo, but when they do they are backsliders and are no longer considered Protestants either by themselves or anyone else. Most Catholics, however, live in both worlds, practicing voodoo whenever there is a need while remaining "good" Catholics in their own fashion.

It is not an uncommon practice for the peasants to attend voodoo services Saturday night, and, after dancing for the gods and being possessed by them, to stop off at the local Catholic chapel for the early mass Sunday morning before returning home to catch up on their sleep. They believe in the doctrines of the church, but they serve the voodoo gods too and see no incongruity in this. They believe that God will surely forgive the person who serves the *loas* if they are conscientious about their Catholicism!

Let us turn our attention now directly to the supernatural beings which are served in voodoo in hope of gaining their help or favor.

First of all *the dead.* The Haitian peasant does not think of the dead as passing from this life to a separate existence of some kind which is far removed from this world. Rather he thinks of the dead as practically coexisting with the living here on earth. They are powerful for either good or evil and as such rank second only to

the regular voodoo gods. Though there is no separate cult for the dead, they are never overlooked in a voodoo ceremony.

For this reason, concern over the dead begins immediately upon the death of an individual. The first requirement for retaining the favor of the dead relative is to provide a proper wake and burial. Contrary to what might be supposed, a voodoo wake is a gay occasion. The close relatives are supposed to continue to shriek and mourn the lost loved one at the arrival of every new visitor all night and until the burial. But the other guests and neighbors entertain themselves with card playing, storytelling, singing, and drinking to amuse the dead person and so send him on his way in a good mood.

The actual funeral and committal are in charge of a Catholic priest if possible. Mourning is rigorously observed by the close members of the family as a matter of piety but also to keep the dead from taking vengeance.

If the dead person had power with the supernatural beings during his lifetime, he will be powerful himself in death. If he has been powerful enough he may even one day become a *loa* himself. Dessalines, the liberator of Haiti, and other historical figures are considered to have become *loas* and sometimes make their appearances by possessing people at voodoo dances.

The dead may be consulted through a voodoo priest, and many of the ceremonies of voodoo are in large part concerned with making contact with the dead and talking with them. It is a fact that many of the voodoo priests are clever ventriloquists, which accounts for the stories we have heard of how people have talked to their loved ones and heard their voices audibly in reply.

Like the voodoo gods (the *loas*), the dead can also possess people, but not with the same powers nor to the same degree. The effect is usually to bring calamity or insanity on the individual possessed by the dead. One

common threat is that of sending several spirits of the dead on someone.

While speaking of the dead, there is one word which has come into the English vocabulary from Haitian Creole —it is *zombi.* A zombi is a person who is believed to have been killed by sorcery, then resurrected through magic to serve his master as a slave with neither mind nor will. In some sections of Haiti there is the greatest fear that one's self or one's relatives might become one of these "living dead," and every precaution is taken to avoid this. If death by sorcery is suspected, the corpse is given poison or stabbed with a dagger to make sure that the dead person will really die. If this is not done, it is believed that the sorcerer may recover the body after burial, revive it, and make the zombi do his bidding until the end of his natural lifetime as decreed by God, when he will actually die.

Superstition also has it that zombis may never be fed salt or they will regain their minds and wills and can then escape, often to expose the identity of their masters. The attitude of almost all of the Haitians toward these beliefs is one of utmost sincerity, and though one can seldom find a real firsthand account that can be verified in some way, everyone knows many zombi stories which he will vouch for as the truth. Doctors and anthropologists have suggested a variety of explanations for the cases that have been seemingly authenticated: drugs, amnesia, poisoning, hypnosis, illness, mental defect, and insanity.

It is interesting to note that the evangelical Christians are not tortured by this fear of becoming zombis, as are their countrymen who still practice voodoo. They believe that a true Christian cannot be made into a zombi.

Closely related to the voodoo concept of the dead is the cult of the *marassa,* the spirits of Twins or multiple births. They are all worshiped together on All Souls' night.

To serve the Twins it is not necessary for there to have been twins in the family within the memory of those who are living. Some families start worshiping the Twins because a voodoo priest has found twins in their unknown ancestors through divining. Or a voodoo priest may simply advise a family to start serving the Twins for the benefits and help they may give.

Food offerings are made to the Twins in twin plates (sometimes in sets of three). This food which is offered may be eaten afterward only by children, as the Twins are always thought of as children. When they possess a person, much like the *loas,* they make a person play marbles and other children's games.

The principal and most powerful supernatural beings served in Haiti are the *loas,* which we can designate in English by either "spirit," "god," or "deity." In the north of Haiti they are also called *angels* and even *saints.* Throughout Haiti they are also called *mysteries,* and some of them are called *demons.* The Haitian Christians quite frequently designate all *loas* as *demons* or *satans,* indicating their feeling of the satanic source of voodoo and the *loas.*

There are considered to be literally hundreds of these voodoo deities. Some of them bear their original African names by which they are still worshiped in West Africa, in spirit cults in northern Brazil, and in Cuba. Some of them have the same names as Catholic saints, but many of them are of purely Haitian origin. The great forces of nature, such as the sun, moon, and stars, are also personified as *loas.*

Where are the *loas* found? In nature they are found inhabiting many special places, such as stones, caves, trees, waterfalls, and especially springs. The food offerings for them are always put in their special place of habitation and services in their honor held there.

An object temporarily housing a *loa* takes on a special spiritual significance, as a water jar with a *loa* in it, such

as is often found on the altar of a voodoo temple. The most important object that the deities habitually reside in are called *loa*-stones. These are polished stone axheads made by the Indians who originally inhabited Haiti. The peasants call them "thunderstones" also and believe they fall from the sky during thunderstorms.

The Haitians think of the *loas* temperamentally in terms of human traits. They are individualistic, and each possesses his own peculiar physical characteristics, voices, and clothing. Their morals are no better, and usually considered to be just a little worse, than those who serve them. They have a sense of humor and can joke, but they can also get extremely angry and retaliate with punishment.

The Haitian peasant has a very personal feeling in his relationship toward the voodoo spirits. In the first place, there are the family deities, which the whole family serves and which are part of the inheritance of each generation. But each follower has one special *loa* with whom he has a personal relationship. The first spirit that possesses him becomes his protector or master, even though he may at times be later possessed by many other *loas*. The voodoo believers often think of this relationship as a contractual one. If they perform the proper ceremonies and give the proper gifts, the *loas* are thereby bound to help them.

In the *loas* the Haitian people have found their explanation of the unknown forces of the universe. These forces they seek to control and direct to their own ends. It is useless to deny the existence of the *loas*. Almost every Haitian has had personal contact and experience with them at some time or other, through possession or some other mysterious happening.

This religious background in voodoo makes it imperative that the evangelical churches have an emotionally satisfying experience to offer the new convert and a continuing sense of real contact with God. Here the doctrine

and experience of the witness of the Spirit and assurance of salvation come into full prominence as essential needs for creating a sense of security in the Haitian believer who has just emerged from the old world of the *loas* into the new world of faith in Christ. There must be a spiritual reality and the manifestation of God's presence in the services of the church, without which the new-found faith will seem drab beside the lively spiritual reality of voodoo. Thank God, we have such an experience to offer to our people in the presence of the living Christ within.

CHAPTER 6

Voodoo

The Service of the Gods

Voodoo is organized as a local society with an *houngan* (voodoo priest) or *mambo* (voodoo priestess) at its head. There are several grades of initiates and also helpers who are learning to become priests. There is a bond of fellowship in the society which is sometimes strong and often obligates the members to mutual help of different kinds. Membership is usually not formal and is open to any and all who wish to participate in the service of the *loas.*

The entire hierarchy is based on the combination of religious experience (possession) and what is called "knowledge." The degree and extent of one's "knowledge" determines one's place in the hierarchy. A person may become an initiate when he has been possessed by a spirit at least once and has gone through the appropriate ceremonies. After this he receives training and study to prepare him for the *kanzo* fire ordeal, of which the test for fitness is putting the hand in boiling oil without feeling pain or being burned, through the power which the spirits give. When one has passed this test he is a full-fledged initiate with all the rights and privileges. If one then wants to advance to the professional level he must undertake a long and expensive training in the secret knowledge and mysteries of voodoo in order to become a priest's helper and finally a priest himself. This is a common ambition in spite of its difficulties, for the voodoo priest is usually one of the most wealthy persons in his community through the fees he charges for his services.

The successful voodoo priest is usually a shrewd judge of human nature. His success depends upon his personal talents, his ability to analyze people and satisfy their needs to some extent, and his reputation for "strength" as indicated by his past successes in controlling the *loas* and getting them to do his bidding and in healing people.

Healing is probably the most important single function of the voodoo priest. He is not only a spirit practitioner but also an herb doctor of wide knowledge and experience. There are other herb doctors in Haiti who are not voodoo priests, but the voodoo priest is called in to handle the cases of "supernaturally" induced sickness which natural remedies are helpless to cure. He can guarantee a cure only for those diseases "sent by man" through the *loas* and magic. He is powerless to do anything against diseases "sent by God."

With so few doctors in Haiti, and practically all of them in the cities, the voodoo priest with a high reputation for cures does a rushing business. Most patients go to a medical doctor only as a last resort, after the ministrations of the voodoo priest have all failed. By this time the voodoo priest has probably also relieved them of all their earthly goods and they can hardly scrape up enough money to pay the doctor, let alone buy the medicine that he prescribes. Going to the hospital is for the peasants the equivalent of resigning one's self to die.

The voodoo priest also serves as a sorcerer in two general areas, divination and the practice of magic through the making of charms. Before any major undertaking, whether religious or not, the family will consult with a voodoo priest to determine if the fates are propitious. Divining is done partly through the revelations of the *loas* during possession and partly through such mechanical devices as a crystal ball or a basin of water.

Charms may be had for all situations and purposes. The *ouanga* (ONE-gah) has the positive objective of do-

ing evil to someone or something. A *guard* may be prepared as a protection against the evil influence of a *ouanga.* There are also many other kinds of charms, including those to ensure success in love, to help in selling, or to keep a job—all of which cost money, a good deal more than any peasant can afford.

Every peasant who practices voodoo has charms and scent bottles (to anoint his body for keeping evil spirits away), crucifixes, and paper saints in and around his house. He usually has a cross planted in a corner of his yard where he makes his offerings of food from time to time. When someone becomes converted, the first thing that he does is call the Christians to his home for a "burning" of all of his voodoo objects.

The center of voodoo activity and service is the temple, called a *houmfort.* The voodoo temple is always built in two sections or two separate structures: a large porch or open shed, where the public ceremonies and dancing take place; and the closed temple proper, where the altars and sacred objects are located.

Just out of the town of Jacmel on the south coast we were called upon to "cleanse" a voodoo temple in the fall of 1959. The converted voodoo priest was the uncle of three of our Bible school students. He had found the Lord when his sister from La Gonave Island came to visit him in what was supposed to be his last sickness. He was giving the temple to be used as a chapel, and already through his testimony about two dozen of his former flock had followed him in receiving the Lord as their Saviour. These and many other curious neighbors were at hand to witness the proceedings.

This voodoo temple was rectangular, about twenty by fifty feet, covered with a corrugated-iron roof, and two-thirds of its length open porch or shed. The remaining third or temple proper had walls of plastered wattle with one door opening on the porch area and another door opening at the rear. When the front door was finally

opened, the crowd of curious little boys flew back in terror. Inside there were two rooms, one an altar room, and the other a sort of storage room for the drums, chairs, and other objects that are normally used during the ceremonies out under the porch area.

It was the altar room that was the most interesting. Stretching the width of the room was a cement altar about three feet high and three feet deep crowded with a rich assortment of ritual paraphernalia. In one corner were the society flags and a saber, probably dating from colonial times, which are flourished during the ceremonies by the priest's helpers. Sitting on the altar was a most unusual collection of water jars, plates, and even a coffeepot, all made of earthenware. This voodoo priest was also a potter and had personally prepared these vessels for his temple. They were delicately decorated with mystical symbols of voodoo cut into the clay.

On one of the plates were several *loa*-stones, on another the remains of a very ancient deck of cards used for divination, on another the gourd rattle with bell attached which is the "diploma" or symbol of the voodoo priest's preparation and authority. The water jars were supposed to contain certain *loas* and other spirits which had been "captured" for safekeeping in the temple. There were also bells, rum bottles, and other jars and containers held in readiness for the various needs of the ceremonies.

The variety of charms and fetishes were forgotten when my eyes lit upon a broken clay idol at one end of the altar. Such things are comparatively rare in voodoo temples and this was the first one I had seen. It was a clay figure which had been about six inches high. It had been broken from the clay base at the knees, and the arms and head had also been broken off but were still there. I was later told that this was done at the time when the voodoo priest had been converted several weeks before, as this clay figure represented the protector-spirit which was responsible for his power. Stand-

ing on a clay pedestal before the figure was a clay bowl which was stained by something which was apparently blood, indicating perhaps that sacrifices were offered in miniature before this figure which had been all-important in the life of the voodoo priest before his conversion.

Along one side wall was a cement baptismal font which was used for ceremonial washings and baptisms. Above it on the wall were primitive paintings of a snake and a rainbow with inscriptions representing Damballa and his "wife," Aida-Wedo, two important *loas*. On the other walls were similar decorations and color prints of the saints representing other *loas* which were particularly served at this temple. For the construction and furnishings of this temple the former voodoo priest declared that he had spent $500, which is a sizable fortune among the peasants of Haiti. And this was a comparatively simple temple compared with others I have seen.

After choosing the more interesting and valuable objects for our voodoo museum at the Bible school, the remaining things were gathered up by the ex-priest and the Christians and burned in a bonfire in the yard in front of the temple to the accompaniment of hymns declaring the deliverance of God from the power of evil and sin. Superstitious neighbors stood around in apparent awe as if they half expected the gods to demonstrate their anger, while another half-drunk voodoo priest heckled us in everything we did and openly hinted for the Christians to give him some of these objects which were being burned. The enthusiasm of the new converts gave eloquent testimony to the heart satisfaction which they had found in turning from voodoo to serve Christ. Before long many of these same onlookers had become Christians and found the same peace and joy they had seen demonstrated that day.

Drums are indispensable for the service of the *loas*. They provide the rhythm for the singing and dancing of the ceremonies, and they provide the particular drum-

beat of each *loa* which is necessary for calling it to come and possess its devotees. There are usually three drums: the *mama* is the biggest, up to three feet or more in height; the second, in between; and the *bula* is the smallest, seldom smaller than about twenty inches high. They are made from hollowed-out logs and covered with goatskin. They are played largely with the hands, though sticks are always employed for additional rhythm either on the drumhead or on the wooden frame.

Along with the drums other instruments are often used. The vaccines are pipes of giant bamboo which are blown over like a bottle and produce a similar deep tone. They are usually used in sets of three, each with a different pitch, with three players who blow alternately in an amazing variety of rhythmic patterns. A crude iron "bell" is played with a spike or short piece of iron for a clapper and provides a high metalic sound similar to a triangle. The *cha-chas* or gourd rattles usually round out the "orchestra," whose main characteristic is an unbelievably varied and sophisticated rhythm.

The first hint to the stranger that there is going to be a voodoo service is the "call" of the drums: a slow, deliberate beat with long rests, which is begun shortly after nightfall. As people begin to gather and other musicians come to join them, the drumming picks up in interest and the singing and dancing begin. At first it is more or less a matter of recreation to fill in the time until the voodoo priest is ready to begin. Services for different purposes follow their own rituals and order, but we will try to give some of the main features which are to be found in most services.

At the beginning there are formal salutations made between the voodoo priest or priestess and the helpers and initiates. The two flags of the society, often richly embroidered, are brought out and paraded about. The chanted ritual usually begins with actual or imitated Catholic ritual and passes into the invocation of the voo-

doo gods. Secret language, which some authors have traced back to West African dialects, is often used in addressing the *loas.* Libations or ritual sprinklings of water are carried out before the sacred objects and the all-important "center post" around which the whole ceremony and dancing revolves literally.

One of the keys to each ceremony is the elaborate corn-meal design which is traced on the dirt floor to represent the various *loas* that are being honored. Lighted candles, offerings, and sacrifices are laid on the symbolic designs in an effort to attract the gods and compel them to appear in possessions during the ceremonies. Chickens are the most common sacrifice, though goats, pigs, and even bulls are sometimes offered. Each spirit has a preference for the type of animal he prefers and for the color as well. The larger animals are sometimes "dressed" with pieces of cloth or clothes of the color preferred by the *loas* to which they are to be sacrificed. Candles are sometimes attached to the horns of goats and bulls about to be offered.

Before an animal can be sacrificed it must eat or drink some of the food or drink offering prepared for the *loa* that is being honored. When it does this, it is then known that the god is ready to accept the victim. In one uncommon type of offering when a human sacrifice has been called for, the soul of a person and of a goat are believed to be exchanged, and the goat is dressed in the person's clothes when he is sacrificed. Rev. Max Conder, now a Nazarene missionary in New Guinea, once saw such a dressed goat being led to a place of sacrifice in the mountains near Gonaives in northern Haiti.

The blood of the animals, which is collected in calabash gourds, is mixed with various ingredients and not only used to mark objects and people but is drunk or tasted by the officiating priest and the people for whom the service is being held. The victims are cut up and cooked, ceremonially offered to the gods, then buried or hung

in special trees. It is not unusual to see one or more dead chickens (uncooked!) hanging in a tree as a sacrifice and food offering to the *loas*.

At the time when the sacrifices are made, prayers and requests are offered to the deities who are being honored or invoked. The services are extremely expensive for the Haitian peasants and are resorted to only because the help of the gods is considered indispensable. The voodoo priest must be paid a stiff fee for his services (up to as much as $50.00 for an elaborate service), and the sacrificial animals and other accessories do not come cheap. In the mind of the person or family paying the bill, the service must pay for itself in the protection, favors, and practical help that the *loas* will give in return.

Possessions may come at any time during the service, but the most usual occasion is during one of the various times of dancing when the specific drum call of the *loa* is played. A powerful voodoo priest will control the spirit possessions so that they will not interfere with the ceremonies and also so that they will come at the times when the appearances of the gods are needed. This is one of the most important features of the voodoo service.

The significance of the coming of a *loa* to possess someone is that it indicates his real presence, a veritable incarnation in the minds of the people. If the possessed person accepts the proferred food offerings, it signifies that the god is pleased and will accord the requests that are made.

Also of great importance is the fact that, when the possessed devotee speaks, it is not he that speaks for himself, but rather the spirit possessing him. His words are oracles which are considered to have great importance. They may explain why bad luck has plagued the person or family and what actions will be necessary to change it. They may indicate special information which is needed or even prediction of future events. They may bring messages from the dead. Every word and action

is carefully noted by the voodoo priest and people as having potential value as a message from the world of the supernatural. The requests of the god-possessed person may not be refused.

The Haitians use the terms of a horse and rider to describe what happens in possession. The person possessed is the "horse" which the *loa* "mounts" or "saddles" and then "rides." The individual is also often said to be "seized" by the *loa,* indicating the fashion in which a possession often comes suddenly and violently without warning. When possessed, the god's personality takes over the body of his servant, and the characteristics of the voice, actions, desires, and general comportment are not the person's but the god's. In this way the possession can usually be quickly identified by anyone who has sufficient knowledge of the voodoo deities to know how they act. Sometimes the god speaks through the lips of the person and announces who he is.

The first possession that I saw was near Cabaret in the early morning at the end of an all-night annual service in honor of the hereditary gods of a certain family. When I happened in on the activities, a young man was writhing on the ground contorting his body into almost impossible shapes while a *mambo* (voodoo priestess) was following him around with a candle in one hand and a gourd dish in the other, watching every movement he made. The possessing spirit was Damballa, who takes the form of a snake and often causes his devotees to climb trees that would otherwise be impossible for them to mount.

Another time in the market place at Montrouis, what was obviously a woman but looked like a man came around begging with a half-calabash dish extended to receive offerings. She was singing a peculiar little song. She improvised the words to address the people from whom she was begging, either thanking them for what they gave or castigating them for giving nothing or too

little. Over her shoulder in crisscross fashion hung a machete in a scabbard on one side and an *alfort* (*all*-four), or mountain peasant's woven sisal bag, on the other. This was obviously Azaka.

Possession, at least in the initial stages, is often accompanied by violent shaking of the body or parts of it, often like convulsions. Sometimes the victims fall into a trance, but not usually before they have performed actions or otherwise given identifications as to which *loa* is possessing them. The possessed person is not considered to be responsible for his actions, and he is not supposed to remember what happened or what he did when he comes back to normal. The ecstasy of possession is greatly desired, and it is considered to be the highest form of "communion" with the gods.

The practice of magic and sorcery is a sort of side line of the voodoo priest. Every voodoo priest who is worth his salt knows all that is necessary to perform any magical practices that he may be called upon to do. But not all voodoo priests will consent to use their knowledge and power for illegal or immoral purposes. Those that do are thought to have "bought" the special power of the more malevolent spirits and to have become themselves creatures of a special sort. They are known by a number of different names in different parts of Haiti. But perhaps one of the commonest designations is that of a "werewolf."

The basic characteristic of such werewolves in Haiti is that they are supposed to eat people or suck their blood, either literally or spiritually, with physical results. They are the "bogey men" of Haiti (though either men or women), whose mere mention brings fear not only to the hearts of children but also to adults. They have sold themselves to the evil *loas* for powers which can bring them wealth or advantage, but which will inevitably reduce them to ruin. Though they sometimes operate by

themselves, they are usually said to gather together in bands late at night to pursue their nefarious objectives.

At such times they purposely seek out chosen individuals or capture chance night travelers to use them for their evil purposes. They often give a person a chance to ransom himself with a large sum of money or else "give" them a member of his family as a substitute. Such a bargain, however, is almost worse than death, for the werewolves will continue to blackmail the person and make demands upon him which he can meet only by resorting to crime or becoming one of them if he is given the chance.

Werewolves are said to have many mysterious powers. However, they must usually shed their skins beforehand, and thereby run the risk that someone may find their skins and salt them, making it impossible for them to get back into their skins again. Many are the stories of people who have seen werewolves flying, flames shooting from their armpits and leaving luminous vapor trails in the darkness. The Haitians also firmly believe that the werewolves can change themselves into animals, insects, a calabash, or even a stone to avoid detection, and that they can turn their victims into animals, such as goats or cattle, then kill them and sell their meat.

During our first winter in Haiti there was supposed to have been a great deal of werewolf activity. We were cautioned by our Haitian friends not to go out late at night and to look over the driver of a taxi carefully before getting into his car (bloodshot eyes are one indication). It was reported that a cache of thirty-five human heads had been found twenty-five miles away near the city of Cabaret, and one preacher told his missionaries not to eat any meat that got stringy during the cooking, as it might be human flesh sold unknowingly in the market.

One Sunday night at the close of a service, a woman was brought to us to pray for her healing that she might

regain her ability to talk. This was a little unusual, but I didn't realize how unusual it was until the next week when I found out why she had been dumb. After the prayer for her healing, during the week she had gradually become able to talk again. The story that she told was that one night two weeks before, a band of werewolves had captured her and had tried to do something to her. When they discovered that they could do nothing, they asked her if she were a Protestant. She said, "Yes." Then they knew they could do nothing to her. They told her they would let her go but that she would be unable to talk. They blindfolded her and left her in an isolated section of town. When she found her way home she was unable to talk until after the prayer for her healing.

"Do you really believe all this?" someone asks. Well, that is difficult to answer. I certainly do not believe *all* the stories that I have been told since I have been in Haiti, but there is a certain underlying truth and reality to some of the things that happen in connection with voodoo which cannot be explained away as merely superstition, lack of a scientific viewpoint, or credulity.

Certainly the majority of the peasants of Haiti are quick to believe such stories on the basis of little or no evidence. But everyone they know in their own culture accepts these things as not only possible but probable. This makes it a relatively simple affair for the voodoo priest to use all forms of deceit and trickery together with fear to keep the people mystified and under his personal control. This probably accounts for well over 90 per cent of what happens in voodoo.

A Baptist missionary, Wallace Turnbull, happened to be around when a voodoo priest was impressing a group of peasants with his "supernatural" powers. He tied a rope between the legs of a table. Then he placed several glasses on the table, meticulously filling them with water up to a certain point only. Then he stooped down and, clasping the edge of the table in his teeth, triumphantly

lifted the table and held it out level without using his hands, to the cheering applause of the mountain peasants.

What Missionary Turnbull saw that the others didn't was the way in which the voodoo priest used the rope he had so carefully tied between the legs of the table at the beginning. As soon as the missionary could get the table away from the voodoo priest, he performed the same feat by taking care to hook the rope over his belt buckle and thereby balance the weight of the table. Even after showing the people and demonstrating how it was done, it was difficult for Pastor Turnbull to persuade his stupefied audience that he did not have some mysterious power akin to that which they believed the voodoo priest had.

Our own Nazarene missionary Harry Rich started using magic tricks in Sunday school to illustrate spiritual truth, until it became evident that some of the people believed that he was actually performing wonders. He still occasionally brings out his magic tricks with their message, but usually only before a group who can understand how he does them when he shows them the trick or illusion involved.

But that is not all there is to voodoo. There remains another 10 per cent to be explained. Our Haitian Christians believe that the real power in voodoo is of satanic origin, and I agree with them. Satan works in different ways in different cultures, but always his aim is the same: to alienate man from God. He uses both natural and supernatural means to accomplish this objective. In sophisticated societies where science has largely replaced God, the idea of a supernatural—whether good or evil—has already been rejected for the most part. Why should Satan risk resurrecting the concept in any form by manifesting his evil power in such a society?

But in Haiti things are entirely different. Haiti is in some ways closer to metaphysical reality than our so-called scientific-based societies, though it needs the cor-

receive of critical judgment. The Haitian's sensitive awareness of the reality of supernatural power works both ways and often makes it easier for the peasant to put his full faith in Christ when he turns from the service of the voodoo spirits.

This brings us to the last question relating to voodoo—the confrontation of Christianity and voodoo. We have already said much about this in discussing the various aspects of voodoo, but let us take a quick look in summary at what happens at the boundaries where they meet.

Genuine evangelical Christianity is successfully winning the contest with voodoo. Every week throughout Haiti hundreds of people are turning from the bondage of voodoo to the freedom of Christ. Almost without exception they become enthusiastic, radiant witnesses for their new-found Lord and begin immediately winning others to Him.

The Protestant churches must be careful to learn a lesson from the experience of the Roman Catholic church with voodoo. It did not give the Haitian people a satisfying spiritual substitute, and that is why they continue to serve the gods. Real Christian experience is what the Haitian people need, but the evangelical churches are going to have to maintain a vital spiritual program if they are to continue to compete successfully with voodoo.

The dramatic success of Protestantism in Haiti has not come from a cold, formal Christianity but from an evangelical type of expression which is closely geared to fill the vacuum left by the system of voodoo when people leave it to become genuinely converted. The high percentage of participation in voodoo finds its counterpart in spontaneous witnessing activity in the evangelical churches, group prayer, enthusiastic congregational singing, public testimony services, and lay evangelism.

God has given the Church of the Nazarene a special mission in Haiti too. We preach that, whereas the people

were consecrated to Satan, so now they may be consecrated to Christ. Whereas their hearts and minds were filled with all manner of evil, so now they may be cleansed, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use. Whereas they used to be possessed by the voodoo gods in the past, now they may be filled by the Holy Spirit, who will enable them to live a holy life and serve Christ effectively.

Our missionaries, Haitian preachers, and people are committed to winning every man, woman, and child possible in order to fulfill these words of St. Paul in Haiti:

> *To open their eyes,*
> *and to turn them from darkness to light,*
> *and from the power of Satan unto God,*
> *that they may receive forgiveness of sins,*
> *and inheritance among them which are sanctified*
> *by faith that is in me* (Acts 26:18).

CHAPTER 7

Churches

Hope for Today and Tomorrow

The brightest spot in almost any Haitian community today is the evangelical church. It may be a humble brush arbor with logs for benches. It may be a country-style, mud-and-wattle, thatched-roof house. Or it may be a simple but neat cement-block building with a corrugated-iron roof. The outward form matters little. It is the inner vitality, the new fellowship of love, the spontaneous growth that attract and hold and win. The evangelical churches in Haiti have taken the offensive and are among the fastest growing churches in the world.

But before we take note of some of the exciting things that are going on in these churches, let us take a quick look at Roman Catholicism in Haiti.

The history of Roman Catholicism in Haiti is a rather sad story. Priests of the Dominican, Capuchin, and Jesuit orders were active in the colony during the days before the Haitian revolution. But in general they were of an inferior type which contributed little to improving the spiritual, moral, or educational state of either the French colonists or the slaves. The religious education of the slaves, while required by the Code Noir of Louis XIV, was purposely discouraged by the masters.

The Haitian revolution (1791-1804) brought an end to the activity of the Roman church for fifty-five years. Since all the priests were Frenchmen, there was no place for them in the new black republic. In vain did the early presidents plead with the Vatican to establish an indigenous (native-controlled) Haitian clergy.

When an agreement with the Vatican was finally reached and a concordat was signed in Rome on March 28, 1860, it was really too late to restore much of what had been the church. The French clergy returned; but voodoo had been accepted openly by several presidents, thus laying the groundwork for the Roman church's biggest problem today, that of extricating itself for the embrace of voodoo.

Among other things the concordat provided for the Roman church to organize an educational system for the country and develop a Haitian clergy. On these two points most Haitians today (both Catholic and Protestant) feel that the Roman church has failed. Although the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny started the first Roman Catholic school in September, 1864, the Methodists had already beat them with the first private school established on July 1, 1846. The national public education system has been in the hands of the Roman Catholics since the beginning. But the 80 to 90 per cent illiteracy of the population is evidence of the failure of the system.

As far as a Haitian clergy is concerned, in 1930 there were 205 priests in Haiti, of whom only 8 were Haitian. In 1954 there were about 300 priests, of whom 80 were Haitian. The total number of priests, nuns, and foreign lay teachers runs close to 1,000, largely French and French Canadian, according to the estimate of Methodist Missionary McConnell.

Compare these figures with those of the Protestants for 1956: 158 foreign missionaries (both men and women, ordained and lay); 112 ordained Haitian pastors; 1,176 unordained Haitian preachers. The number of Haitian pastors and preachers has undoubtedly nearly doubled by the present time. It is no wonder that the work of the Protestant churches is appreciated by the Haitian public in general because of its encouragement of a Haitian ministry, to say nothing of its contribution in education and social work.

The Roman Catholic church is the state church of Haiti and according to the constitution "enjoys a special position," but freedom of worship for the other churches is guaranteed. The actual liberty and privileges of the Protestant churches vary from one administration to another, but there is a good degree of religious liberty.

While the Roman Catholic church is administered through France, the Protestant churches are exclusively English and American in origin and affiliation. Protestant missions began in Haiti with the arrival of two English Methodist missionaries in 1816, who came to the Republic at the invitation of President Petion. At about the same time in the north, King Christophe brought in three English Anglican priests to help direct his schools, but they did not establish a church.

In 1824 a group of American Negroes were colonized in Haiti, and shortly afterward the African Methodist Episcopal church, the Baptists, and the American Episcopals founded churches mainly for these colonists. The development of Protestantism in these early days was slow and largely limited to the cities and towns. Services were carried on almost exclusively in French, and few of the masses were reached with the gospel.

But during the past thirty years the Protestant church in Haiti has been one of the fastest growing churches in the world. There has been an influx of new missions, and the older works have taken on a new evangelistic fire. In 1925 there were 12,198 Protestants in Haiti. In 1955 the government Institute of Statistics gave the official membership of the evangelical community as 393,356 —thirty-two times what it was in 1925! During the past five years the churches have grown even faster.

This almost unbelievable growth is one of the several characteristics which remind one strongly of the Apostolic Church of New Testament days. "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47), is literally fulfilled in many Haitian churches. This growth

is the natural result of an atmosphere of spontaneous witnessing and evangelism.

There is very little of the man-fearing spirit among our Haitian Christians. The church is on the offensive. They have found the best thing in the world, and they know it. Naturally, they reason, anyone who has found Christ and the joy and peace He gives would want to share it with everyone who will listen. And though they often need to have knowledge added to their zeal, the Haitian Christians are literally winning thousands of people to the Lord each month. Probably more than 95 per cent of the new converts are won through personal evangelism. Mass evangelistic techniques are comparatively new to Haiti and have not yet become thoroughly adapted to the Haitian situation. Even when they do, personal witnessing will continue to be the lifeline of the growth of the Church.

There is nothing any Haitian Christian loves to do more than to go on a "mission." By that he means helping out in a service away from his own local church. It may be an open-air service in town or country—thousands of such services are held every week, particularly on Sunday afternoons. It may be a trek into the mountains to hold a service in front of the house of anyone who will give permission. Almost any Christian can "preach" at the drop of a hat, and he is not afraid to announce the Christian message to voodoo priest or light-skinned elite. In this way regular preaching points and "stations" are begun which soon develop into churches on their own as people in the neighborhood get converted. So extended is this activity that few missionaries or Haitian pastors can get around to visit all the "stations" that their people start spontaneously until they are so big they must be organized as churches.

A second characteristic of the Haitian church, which it shares with the Early Church of Acts, is its separation from the world. We have already mentioned how com-

plete the separation is with voodoo when someone becomes a real Christian. This same demarcation continues in the areas of worldliness and Christian ethics. Except for a certain liberal element in a few of the larger city churches, the Haitian Christians in general draw the line at smoking, drinking, dancing, cockfighting, gambling (including lottery), the public theater, and immodest dress. One practice which all the Protestants retain in common with the Catholics, however, is that of women wearing hats to church for divine services. If it is to be a program or business meeting only, hats are considered not necessary.

A third apostolic characteristic found in our Haitian Christians is genuine spirituality, as indicated by a unity among all the believers of all the churches, liberty of expression in public services, the serious practice of prayer, and the common occurrence of genuine healings by faith.

The close fellowship of Christians in Haiti is a remarkable thing to behold! Denominational barriers mean little or nothing to the Haitians once true spiritual identity has been discovered. Here is true ecumenicity at work—unity without the thought of church union. However, this rich fellowship is not basically disdainful of church loyalties or doctrine but rather is an expression of the real love by which the early disciples were recognized.

Public services are sometimes something of a shock to visitors who are used to a more formal type of worship. This is true of all but the larger city churches, even in the older denominations. The congregations encourage the preacher on with hearty "Amens!" and, especially in the country, often do not hesitate to make other comments. Spontaneous testimonies and solos are a common thing, sometimes extending the services to as much as two or three hours in length at times. The services seem more like a happy family gathering for worship and praise than our over-programed services in the homeland.

Prayer means a great deal to our Haitian Christians. For them it is a natural occupation at any occasion, in any place. They always give thanks before eating or drinking anything, even a glass of water. When they return from a trip to town or at the end of a journey away from home, they bow their heads in a prayer of thanksgiving. They almost never enter a church without bowing in prayer before other activities are engaged in, even during a service.

Most churches have an early morning prayer meeting daily beginning at from four to five, so as not to hinder with work. It is usually attended by a much higher percentage of the congregation than that which attends the midweek prayer meetings in the homeland. It is not unusual to find from 150 to 200 people gathered at the early morning hour in our Port-au-Prince church.

In the country when distance does not permit such group prayer in the church, early morning prayer is the rule in Christian homes. Many a time in the mountains when staying with a Haitian family I have been awakened before dawn with the singing of a hymn followed by earnest prayer. It is a heart-warming experience to hear the girls who work for you praying in their room, or the Bible school students seeking God's blessing in the chapel before they get started in the day's activities.

Among the Christians of Haiti, divine healing is an everyday event, even as it was in the days of Peter, John, and Paul. Before their conversion they sought their healing at the hands of the voodoo priest. Now that they are converted, it is the natural thing for them to depend upon God to heal them when medical help is unavailable or too expensive for them to afford. They call for the preacher and Christians to come and pray for them, or ask to be prayed for at the close of the service in church when they are able to come. God often answers in marvelous ways.

Some months ago Previlon Emmanuel and his common-law wife were converted in their home about three or four miles from the Bible school. The man was an army veteran and was bedridden with an ailment of rheumatic symptoms which had kept him from walking for years. When the couple wanted to be married shortly after their conversion, I married them in their home and he could hardly sit up for the ceremony. After the ceremony the Christians gathered around him with me to pray for his healing.

One week later he walked to church for the Sunday morning service. I was a little anxious about him and cautioned him to be careful. He gently smiled and explained in a most natural way that the Lord had healed him. That was that! Never have I seen a more simple, childlike faith. Today he faithfully attends the services of the church and walks over six miles into the nearest town, a living witness of the power of God to heal both body and soul. Such stories could be multiplied by the thousands, but I personally know this story to be true.

The fourth characteristic that demonstrates the apostolic vitality of the Haitian church is the adaptation and use of dramatic and musical elements from Haitian culture by the Church. This means that the gospel is at home in Haiti, that the Church is naturalized.

We will speak of the dramatic elements first. No one who has heard a Haitian preacher utilize the Haitian storytelling technique to make a Bible story relive will ever forget the experience. Vivid details drawn from Haitian life are injected with the surprising result that the Biblical message is projected with unexpected clarity and power. In Sunday school lessons as well as in sermons the ever-fascinating Bouqui and Malice stories that every Haitian knows emerge as fitting illustrations of gospel truth with a definitely Haitian flavor.

I will never forget a moving pageant created by the young people of our La Serre church in the Cul de Sac

Plain. It was presented to a packed congregation on a Sunday afternoon "Youth Week" program. We laughed and cried as the story unfolded of how an unconverted family was first deceived by the voodoo priest, then won to Christ through the witness of Christian neighbors. At Bible school socials, groups of students compete to present the most ingenious pantomimes of Biblical stories for the others to guess. To them the gospel and the stories of the Bible are a natural and living source of inspiration and enjoyment.

One Saturday night a number of years ago I was on a week-end visit to our church in the mountain section of Barrau in central Haiti, five hours on horseback from where we left the jeep. After giving a short message and showing a Bible filmstrip on the Coleman projector, I left the church to get a little sleep in the country-style parsonage next door. The pastor was continuing with the Haitian-style business meeting, not unlike the old-fashioned Methodist class meeting, to prepare the members for the Communion service the next day. There was occasional singing in between testimonies as I drifted off to sleep.

About an hour later I was suddenly awakened by the sound of enthusiastic singing to the accompaniment of hand-clapping. The thing that was unusual about what I heard was *what* they were singing. It was not one of our hymn tunes, I knew immediately. It had the lilt and form of Haitian folk music. I put my clothes on over my pajamas and went back into the church. There by the light of a kerosene lantern the churchful of mountain folk were giving expression to the joy of their salvation with words and music that breathed the very soul of Haiti.

They were singing, "Give me Thy power in my heart./ Give me Thy love, Jesus./ Let me carry the cross, O Lord./ I'm going to sing Thy glory." The rhythmic pattern of the melody and responses was so complicated that I

almost despaired of writing it down the next morning when I got some of the young people off to myself before Sunday school started.

They were also singing testimony songs that made fun of the voodoo priest and told of their deliverance from his power: "The voodoo priest uses a flag to blind people's eyes so he can steal from them./ That's something for people who are stupid./ Don't try to deceive the Church of God." Another similar song went like this: "My pretty little hen—/ The voodoo priest got that./ My white shirt—/ The voodoo priest got that./ My new shoes—/ The voodoo priest got them./ It's time for that voodoo priest to get converted!"

Before the night was over they had sung many, many more of their own songs as well as some of our Western hymns adapted to their style with leader and response technique. Here was the Christian equivalent to the all-night voodoo services that they had so recently left. Here was new life in Christ—yet vitally, intimately related to the culture and needs of these mountain folk.

Many of these Haitian gospel songs have come down from the mountains and are sung in station meetings and in some services of the less formal city churches. Just recently I even heard the congregation in a rural Episcopal chapel singing some of these Haitian spirituals to the accompaniment of hand clapping. (I don't know if the bishop is aware of this, but if he is, I hope he won't stop it.)

New songs are constantly being composed, and they sweep around the country with lightning rapidity. Their form is so typically Haitian that even the people of the world sing them along with the Christians in open-air services, little realizing that at the same time the gospel message is getting into their hearts. One day some of these songs may become classics and take their place along with American Negro spirituals in collections of the world's great Christian songs.

The Baptists form the largest group in Haiti. Indeed the name "Baptist" in some sections of Haiti is equivalent to the name "Protestant." There are about a half dozen large Baptist missions and a number of small ones which carry on a varied work including Bible schools, hospitals, printing, and radio work. There are also a large number of Pentecostal missions with work extending throughout Haiti. The work of the Episcopal church in Haiti is the largest missionary district of its denomination in the world.

Missions of the Wesleyan tradition are the Methodist church (British), the African Methodist Episcopal church, the Salvation Army, the Oriental Missionary Society, which operates a radio station, the Wesleyan Methodist church, and several independent holiness missions. Haiti is the largest missionary field of the Wesleyan Methodist church, and they operate a large medical program in three centers as well as three Bible schools.

In addition there are three active sects: the Jehovah's Witnesses, who have over forty missionaries in Haiti; the Seventh-day Adventists; and Bah'ai.

The missionary force of Haiti is an unusually spiritually minded group. There is a warm fellowship, and this helps to maintain good relations, since there are no comity agreements in Haiti. The missions are united in seeking to win Haiti for Christ.

CHAPTER 8

Opportunity

God's Open Door to Haiti

"Will you accept a missionary appointment to Haiti?" was the question put to us before the Department of Foreign Missions one morning in January, 1950. Haiti? I fumbled around for words to reply. This was the first time Mary and I had heard anything about Haiti with *us* involved. We had volunteered for missionary work in Latin America, but we assumed it would be in a Spanish-speaking country because of our preparation.

About all I could manage to say in reply was, "Uh." Then Dr. Sanner came to my rescue and said, "What you mean is that you will if you feel that it is the Lord's will." "Yes, that is exactly what we mean," I replied.

Well, that is how we got started on our way to Haiti.

When the cold January air hit us outside, my mind flashed back to junior high days when I had read the book *Black Majesty* about King Christophe and the Haitian revolution. Then my memory went back further to grammar school days when I used to devour the old *National Geographics* and I remembered two or three articles on Haiti, especially the one with pictures of Christophe's Citadel.

At home we prayed together for God's leading, and the sweet assurance came into our hearts that He was moving and opening the door.

The door that God opened for us that day has remained open wide with opportunity during the past ten years. First by faith, then by sight we have seen the

fulfillment in Haiti of the words of Paul: "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20).

As we pause at the beginning of a new decade and consider what God has done, we can see two periods in the past and another immediately before us in the future. The first five years, from 1950 to 1955, was the phase of planting the church, of carefully nurturing it that it might not die. The next five years, from 1956 to 1960, was a time of deepening the roots, of characterizing the church as a Church of the Nazarene and a holiness church.

The decade immediately before us promises to be one of unparalleled expansion and flourishing for the Church of the Nazarene in Haiti. With these things in mind, let us take a quick look at how God kept the doors of opportunity open during the past ten years.

Haiti Diary tells the intimate story of our first two years in Haiti. But there is a prologue that comes before which illustrates how true it is that "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

A Haitian schoolteacher and law student got a call to preach in 1945. His name was Carlos Egen. He heard about the Church of the Nazarene and wrote Dr. Jones in 1946. The same year he received a visit from Dr. Powers. In 1948 he was recognized by the General Board and started receiving a small amount of support. Then later in 1948 he was visited by Dr. Miller, and again by Dr. Vanderpool in 1949.

In January, 1950, we were appointed and arrived in Haiti on October 3. What we found was a collection of several groups which Brother Egen had banded together to form his work. The first statistics we garnered from Brother Egen in the fall of 1950 indicated 1 organized church and 11 outstations with 177 baptized members and 557 probationers, giving a total constituency of 734. However, a more careful count by ourselves the next year

revealed a total constituency of only 590. But this is the beginning which God used to get the Church of the Nazarene into Haiti.

Due to misinformation given us by an official, we had to leave Haiti after six months and re-enter with a nonimmigrant visa, so that we could get our permanent residence permits. Our first vehicle, a gray jeep station wagon given by the Andrew Riises of Modesto, California, arrived just in time for the frantic preparations for departing for Puerto Rico. Up to that time we had done all our travel by foot, horseback, or public vehicles. This jeep was to be one of the greatest blessings to us and to our work during the next few years.

On return from Puerto Rico we continued our language study of both French and Creole until we were able to open our first Bible school classes on October 3, 1951, the first anniversary of our arrival in Haiti. Seven patient students came three days a week from four to six in the afternoon to study introduction to the Old and New Testaments, doctrine, and music. Among them was a young man in the Haitian Coast Guard by the name of Joseph Simon, who became one of our first Bible school graduates in May, 1960, and one of our first Haitian elders in December, 1960.

Our first visitor was Dr. Vanderpool, who returned to Haiti for a five-day visit on October 26, 1951. How much Mary and I appreciated the counsel and particularly the fellowship of another Nazarene! It was Dr. Vanderpool who had taken us out to dinner just after we were appointed in January, 1950, and with tears in his eyes had shown us pictures of the land to which he was sending us, almost as if we were his own children. Now, here we were settled and started on a great adventure for Christ.

We did not have to wait long for more Nazarene fellowship. Mrs. Louise R. Chapman visited us in February, 1952, and gave us some of the most valuable and

and practical advice that two young missionaries could hope for. She could hardly resist the urge to try to talk Zulu to our people and constantly remarked about things which reminded her of Africa. We could see that Haiti had gotten hold of her heart—as it seems to do with almost all our visitors. Over the years she has kept up an unflagging interest in our field and has sent us the most helpful and encouraging letters.

In the wake of Mrs. Chapman's visit, trouble came to a head which had been brewing for some time. For weeks we had been praying over the situation and had told the Lord that, if it were necessary to begin over again completely from the start, we were willing to do whatever God showed us was necessary in order to have a work that God could bless. In His own unexpected way, the Lord took care of the matter without the need of any initiative on our part.

Thanksgiving Day, 1952, was probably the biggest day in our life in Haiti up to that point. Our first new missionaries arrived in Haiti, Charles and Alberta Alstott with their son, Danny. During the first two years in Haiti there were times when we had felt very much alone and isolated from the type of fellowship which we had enjoyed in the States. All of our anticipation of the Alstotts' coming was justified in the warm fellowship and collaboration which we experienced with them during the next five years.

Two days after the Alstotts' arrival, Dr. Young came for an official visit. During this time a number of important actions were taken, including the interviewing of the Conders, who were appointed as associate missionaries by the General Board in January, 1953, and began working with us in March of the same year. Max and Mary Alice Conder were Nazarenes who had come to Haiti with an independent holiness mission just one month before we had. Their mission was in the process of closing its operations in Haiti, and God brought the Con-

ders to us at a critical time when our northern churches were badly in need of increased supervision.

Meanwhile God was moving to permit us to open the Bible school full time for additional training of our younger preachers. We were able to rent some property and buildings just outside of Port-au-Prince and run the Bible school for eight months from July, 1953, to February, 1954. During this time the Alstotts were indispensable co-workers, even if they did engage in some undercover activity. On August 2, 1953, after several months of secret negotiations, they surprised me on my birthday with a piano bought as a gift from friends of Pasadena College days. I had given up the piano as part of my missionary consecration, but God gave it back to me!

Through unusual circumstances the Lord closed the Bible school and turned our attention to hunting for property to buy in another section of the capital area. The two semesters of Bible school were not wasted. They gave our students an initial preparation for their ministry which helped them in their work and kept them steady until a number of them were able to return to Bible school later. This change of pace and occupation also permitted us to turn our attention to building our first two churches. One hundred miles to the north, Max Conder started the Marose church; and in the south, Brother Alstott began the Port-au-Prince church.

During this year God led us to find what we now feel is an ideal location for our headquarters and Bible school, and two days before Christmas we completed the purchase of the property at Freres (which means "brothers"). It is ten miles from the heart of Port-au-Prince in the foothills, where an almost constant breeze keeps the temperature relatively pleasant the whole year.

By March, 1955, Brother Alstott had the Port-au-Prince church ready for Dr. Rehfeldt to dedicate. On Saturday night we had a farewell service in the shack that had housed the congregation since its beginning in

1952. There were tears of joy in the eyes of many as we marched two blocks over to the new church to turn on the lights and have the final prayer.

The dedication on Sunday morning was our first big public event. There were representatives from the Haitian government and from many of the different missions. About six hundred crowded inside the church, and there were several hundred people outside as well. It was a new day for the Church of the Nazarene in Haiti when at last we had a well-built, respectable building that we could invite anyone to. We were equally thrilled to have Dr. Rehfeldt dedicate the Marose church and the Docine chapel in the north, which Brother Conder had built.

In July, 1955, we returned to the States on furlough. During our furlough year, in addition to superintending the field, Brother Alstott systematically worked at improving the new property, putting in the water and electricity. He began the construction of the first missionary home and by February, 1956, it was ready for them to move in.

The Conders furloughed in June in time to attend the General Assembly in Kansas City. In September we arrived back in Haiti, and in November our new missionary couple, the Brian Vanciels, came.

The year 1957 was the year of revolutions in Haiti, but in spite of it all Brother Alstott got the Bible school built and did a magnificent job. Our one regret was that the Alstotts had to furlough in July before the dedication. In October another new missionary couple came. Harry and Marion Rich, who had pastored the Granite Church in Quincy, Massachusetts, for five years. They got into the work almost immediately and were a tremendous help.

Our second big public event was the Bible school dedication by Dr. Benner on December 1, 1957. Again there were representatives from the Haitian government, from the American Embassy, and from many missions. Over six hundred Nazarenes and friends of the church

attended. All were impressed by the practical, well-built buildings as well as by the magnificent dedication address which Dr. Benner gave.

In January, 1958, we moved into the new missionary home which I had been building, while at the same time Rich and Vanciel were finishing the Bible school dormitory.

February 25 we opened the Bible school for the first time in our new buildings at Freres with six students. During the spring Rich and Vanciel built the dining hall, which was ready to use for our first annual district assembly in September. Up to this time we had held annual workers' conferences, but we felt that the time had come to begin organizing the district. The first assembly was a complete success. We launched a tithing emphasis for the year that resulted in a 65 per cent increase in giving during the year.

There were two outstanding events toward the end of the year. Our fall enrollment in the Bible school came up to twenty students. In October the Lord used our preacher then at Pont l'Estere, Massillon Pierre, to bring the first great revival to our student body. It was a genuine time of heart-searching and restitution, and many of the students were sanctified. It spread out into many of our churches and produced wide-reaching results. The second event of great significance for us was in December when we gave the first district licenses to six of our preachers: Jules Boliere, Fetus Dauphin, Monneus Fleury, Luc Jean, Massillon Pierre, and Joseph Simon.

In January, 1959, the second semester of the Bible school opened with twenty-seven students. In February we had the first of our four-day Mardi gras youth camps. The Mardi gras week end with its street dancing and parades is a time of great temptation to the young people to join in the pleasures of the world. We conceived the idea of having a Christian counterpart in special youth activities at this same time. When we found out several

Baptist churches had tried the same idea the year before with outstanding success, we decided definitely to do it. The camps were held in various zones with several churches going together. The program was similar to our N.Y.P.S. institutes with a full day of both spiritual and social activities. This same program was repeated again in 1960 with even greater results. Reports came in of many young people saved and sanctified in the camps during these days. Since this is approximately the same time as Youth Week in the States, we have decided to use that name in the future.

In July, 1959, we had the dedication of the much-appreciated day school of the Port-au-Prince church, which was built under the supervision of Brother Rich.

In September the Gene Smiths arrived to begin their ministry in Haiti. The next Sunday we dedicated our simple but beautiful Cabaret church, twenty-five miles north of Port-au-Prince, which Harry Rich had built during the summer. During two weeks of revival meetings which immediately followed several dozen people were won to the Lord.

On May 6, 1960, we had our first Bible school commencement with five graduates. Lyle Prescott, superintendent in Puerto Rico, was able to come over to be our commencement speaker and all of our people greatly appreciated his ministry. After commencement we took the five fellows who graduated on an evangelistic tour through the north for several days and visited the famous Citadel of King Christophe, which most of them had never seen.

During the summer Harry Rich experimented with a new idea in church building which we had been wanting to try for some time. It consisted of building a church without any side walls, with the intention that the local congregation would finish them later. In this way a much larger church could be built which would be more adequate for the future needs of the congregations. The idea

was a real success, and such churches were erected at Merger on the mainland and two on La Gonave Island at Etroits and Cherissable.

The fall Bible school semester opened with a record enrollment of thirty-four. Two days later the Vanciels left on furlough.

Dr. Benner arrived for his second visit in Haiti on December 3; and on December 5 our most recent missionary couple, the James De Pasquales, also arrived. The last night of the third annual district assembly which Dr. Benner held for us, our first Haitian elders were ordained: Monneus Fleury, Massillon Pierre, and Joseph Simon. During the assembly Dr. Benner's messages on holiness for the leaders of our churches resulted in a real heart hunger for scriptural holiness. A large number were definitely sanctified, and the assembly closed on a high pitch of enthusiasm for putting "Evangelism First" and extending the work of the Church of the Nazarene throughout Haiti.

Our fellow missionaries have each made a unique contribution to the development of the field. Charles and Alberta Alstott (1952-57) came from Illinois, where they returned to pastor when a serious automobile accident during their furlough hindered their return to Haiti. The Port-au-Prince church, the La Serre church, and the Bible school will continue to remind our people of Brother Alstott's consecrated building talent as well as of his solid and edifying preaching. Mrs. Alstott made her contribution to the field as a nurse and ever-present help at "Chuck" Alstott's side. At the General Board meeting in January, 1961, they were reappointed to return to Haiti.

Max and Mary Alice Conder (1953-56) came originally from Indiana, but they were already in Haiti when they joined our staff in 1953. They loved to be out among the people, as they constantly were, in the north, where they served. Brother Conder supervised the building of

the dispensary and seven chapels. Mrs. Conder's ministry as a nurse was equal to that of two or three medical technicians combined. Nothing would cheer her up more than to get a call at three o'clock in the morning to go by foot several miles up into the mountains to deliver a baby or minister to someone who was dying. The Conders are now in New Guinea, where the prayers of their Haitian friends follow them.

Brian and Evelyn Vanciel (1956-60) worked formerly on the American Indian District, but they called Sacramento, California, their home. They followed the Conders as the second resident missionaries in the northern Gonaives area, one hundred miles north of Port-au-Prince. Although it was not possible for us to reopen the dispensary during their stay in that area, Mrs. Vanciel ministered as a nurse to a constant stream of people who came to her door. In addition to supervising the relief work in his area during the drought and famine, Brother Vanciel did a great deal to organize the local churches; and he built the basic unit of the tabernacle at our district center at Passe Reine.

Harry and Marion Rich (1957——), from Pennsylvania and New Jersey respectively, arrived in Haiti shortly after the Alstotts had furloughed and quickly filled the gap in a most efficient way. They learned the languages rapidly and well and were soon engaging their talents and experience in an amazing variety of essential duties. They both teach in the Bible school; and, among other things, Marion has used her ability as a "lady preacher" to help establish a local outstation at Pernier. Harry has spent his summers building churches, schools, and other needed buildings. His evangelistic ministry, particularly in preaching holiness, has been a valuable and effective model for our Haitian preachers. The Riches have carried the spiritual burden of the field in a most heartening way and have been determined to see our field continue to grow under God's blessing.

Gene and Catherine Smith (1959——) came from Maryland, where they were teaching high school at the suggestion of the General Board as part of their preparatory experience. They have fitted into the missionary program in a splendid way and have always been ready to do whatever needed to be done. They have made an excellent start in the languages, and Gene is already teaching one class in the Bible school. Catherine has been an efficient bookkeeper and district treasurer. Their cheerful personalities have endeared them not only to their fellow missionaries but also to our Haitian Christians.

James and Mary DePasquale (1960——) have just arrived from Oakland, California, where James spent the last two years learning the printing trade. We plan to set up a print shop as a basis for developing a large literature program in French and Creole for our rapidly growing district. Their previous experience in Lebanon and Greece should enable them to adjust quickly to our field and learn the languages. James is the brother of Don DePasquale, our missionary in Damascus, Syria. They have already made a good start in what promises to be a wide-reaching ministry in Haiti.

Now, what of the future? We can only guess at what is ahead by projecting it from the past. Here is what God has done in Haiti in ten years:

	1950	*1960*
Churches	1	29
Outstations	12	90
Baptized members	177	1,388
Probationers	557	4,765
Total constituency	734	6,153

The amazing thing is that each year our percentage of growth is increasing. During the past two years the membership more than doubled. During 1960 the total constituency increased by 68 per cent. The average yearly increase for the past quadrennium was 33 per cent.

What is the secret of this growth? It is the spontaneous evangelism of our Haitian Christians. They cannot keep the gospel a secret—they must share it with others. They are "normal" Christians, who find it a joy to witness for Christ, not only in the church, but in the market place, in neighbors' homes, on the street, or on the trail. And their testimony is contagious. It makes other people *want* to be saved.

They are also Christians who have obeyed Christ's command to "tarry until" before they "go." The Holy Spirit has cleansed their hearts and filled them with the power of His presence until even the world recognizes that they are different. Not only do they have a vision for winning souls for Christ, but they also want to see their fellow Christians go on in the Lord and enter the life of holiness.

Finally, they are Nazarenes—Haitian Nazarenes. They love the church, and they believe that God has given the Church of the Nazarene a special mission in Haiti. They have found a spiritual home, and they want others to join the "family." They feel that the best way they can extend God's kingdom is by enthusiastically carrying forward the program of *their* church. They are real Nazarenes who are putting "Evangelism First."

God has given the Church of the Nazarene the opportunity of the century in Haiti. Will we rise to meet the challenge?

We missionaries know that with the help of your prayers we are going to have to work harder than ever at making our existing churches completely self-supporting—they are all partially self-supporting now. For we do not expect the Church of the Nazarene to increase our operational funds each year in proportion to our increase in growth.

Our Haitian Nazarenes have already risen to the challenge by adopting the goal of reaching an average of 50 per cent self-support by the end of 1961. A 2 per cent

home missions budget was also voted at the district assembly in December, 1960, to help in the goal of establishing a Church of the Nazarene in every large city of Haiti during the quadrennium.

In order to keep up with our expected growth we shall have to expand the capacity of the Bible school. Dozens of new churches will have to be built. Above all, we must keep the spirit and spirituality which have always characterized the Church of the Nazarene around the world.

This task is not just ours as missionaries. It is a spiritual battle, and as such *you* can and *must* take part in it. Your faith can move mountains in Haiti. By prayer you can be responsible for keeping God's blessing upon our work until the Church of the Nazarene covers our beloved land of Haiti with centers of spiritual fire giving witness to the doctrine and experience of scriptural holiness.

Sylvia Streit