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## open door through **BLACK AFRICA**

“... Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it...,” said Jesus Christ concerning the Church of God (Rev. 3:8).

On November 2, 1973, Mr. Harold Jackson and I completed the fourth annual African baptizing tour. Lasting three months and covering over 30,000 miles, the tour included ten countries. Also visited were the Canary Islands, just off the west coast of the African continent.

For three months the second largest continent in the world became our home away from home. A land of stark contrasts, varied cultures, multiple tribes and sub-tribes, Africa has warm and sincere people, gorgeous natural scenic beauty of verdant rainforests, shimmering waterfalls and lush countryside — as well as the depressing sights of squalor, poverty, sickness and disease.

### **Tour Logistics**

Many months of planning and organization went into the tour from the Bricket Wood campus. After the requests had been analyzed and plotted in terms of location, Harold Jackson, Robert Morton and their assistants sent letters to our members and co-workers who had requested per-

sonal counsel from a representative of Ambassador College or the Worldwide Church of God. We then informed them that our representatives would be visiting their country on a particular date, arranging an appointment at a set time and location. In this way we were able to organize an appropriate number of visits per day.

Because most of our responses are from our English-language publications, foreign languages and various African dialects presented no major problem. Also, the vast majority of those we visited had studied our Correspondence Course and already had a working knowledge of the doctrines of God's Church.

An average day of visiting would begin at 8:00 a.m. with about fifteen people scheduled to meet with us in our hotel suite or meeting room.

We would begin by going through the pronunciation of those *long* African names. I must admit we did get better as the months went by. We can now handle with relative ease such beautiful “structures” as Mr. Dede-Dwanena, Mr. and Mrs. Agyemang-Duah and Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Imifiabomon.

After the introductions we would answer questions about



Roland Sampson — GN

Members at Feast of Tabernacles at Victoria Falls, Rhodesia (above). Right: The spectacular falls, 355 feet high and over a mile wide.

news of the Work, the College, new publications and the Bible. Then there would be a short lecture followed by private personal counseling.

After a full day of these activities, often the phone would ring at 9 or 10 p.m. Someone who had traveled a great distance would want personal counsel. Of course he or she was welcomed at any hour.

This year we visited 18 cities. Of the 348 people counseled, 43 were baptized. We missed 171 who were scheduled for visits — partially because many letters were lost in the mail. Another factor was that with the six-day work week, many felt they could not take the necessary time from a work day to travel and visit with us and still observe the Sabbath.

### The First Stop

Our first stop was Casablanca, Morocco, in North Africa. Here we were greeted by the smiling faces of the entire congregation — *all three members* of the Church of God! After a good meal together and a Bible study on the Sabbath, we were on our way to our next stop — Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. Here we had one visit scheduled, but were unable to make contact.

The next day we returned to the continent, landing in Monrovia, Liberia, at 2:00 p.m. With a visit scheduled at 3:00 p.m., we arrived about the same time as our visitors — a married couple.

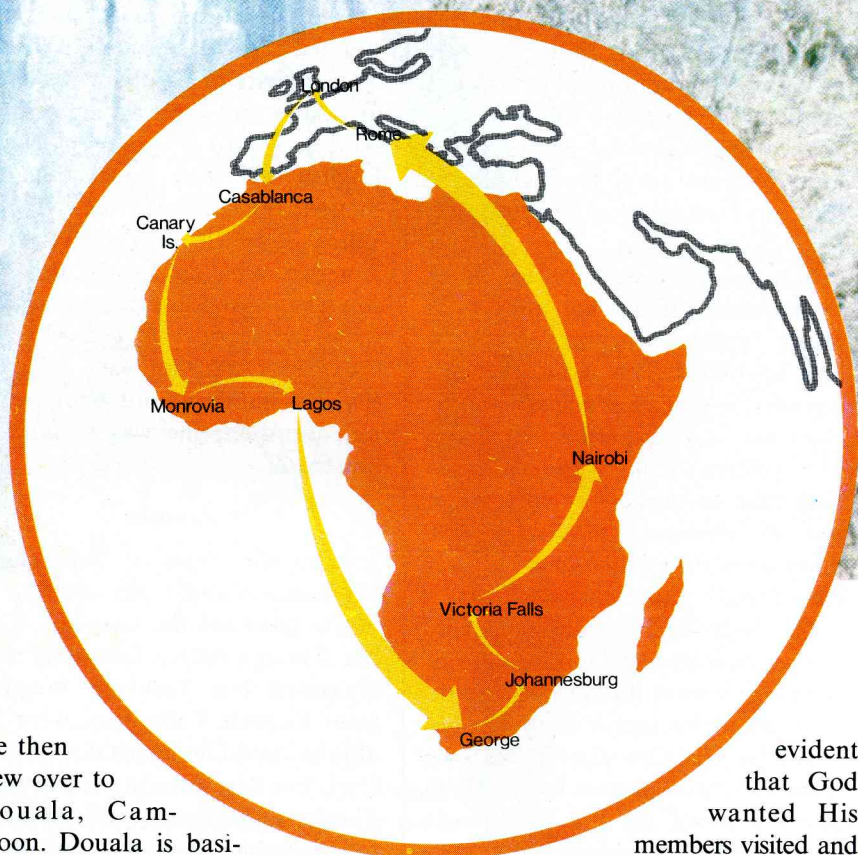
The man is a university student studying in Monrovia. His wife lives at his home 300 miles away. His

wife had traveled that 300 miles to join her husband to meet God's ministers. This was the second year the man had met with us, and this time he was ready for baptism. This was as much a joy for us as for the two of them — *the first baptism* of the tour.

### Ghana

Upon leaving Monrovia, we flew to Accra, Ghana, where we spent the next ten days. The visits were profitable as well as rewarding, especially with those whom we had met the year before.

After leaving Accra, we drove 160 miles northwest to Kumasi to spend an additional five days. The drive proved very helpful to us in getting an overall view of the landscape, enabled us to converse with the



people and to see many of the outlying villages and towns away from the hustle and bustle of the big cities.

Our driver, Abraham, was invaluable as an interpreter. Even though he spoke English fluently as well as a few dialects, some of the dialects outside his locale were difficult for him to speak, even though he could understand them.

After arriving in Kumasi and spending a Sabbath with our members, they prepared a 100% African dinner for us. Phonetically speaking, it is called Fu-Fu. It consisted of pounded yams or cassava served with a very richly seasoned soup made of goat meat, beef or fish (and sometimes all three). It was very tasty.

After driving back to Accra,

we then flew over to Douala, Cameroon. Douala is basically a French-speaking town, but thankfully we had no language problem because we visited with a couple from the university who majored in French and English; and they proved very helpful in assisting us with any language difficulties.

### Nigeria

At last we were off to Nigeria, where we spent 28 days and visited six major cities — Port Harcourt, Enugu, Benin City, Lagos, Ibadan and Kano.

This year was only the second time we have been granted visas into Nigeria. However, it was quite

evident that God wanted His members visited and His prospectives counseled.

Upon leaving London we had entry visas granting us permission to stay only 14 days, and yet we had a schedule of visits for 28 days. As we entered the country, we asked for an extension of a little over two weeks.

After finding we were from Ambassador College, which publishes *The Plain Truth* magazine, the customs and immigration officer gladly extended permission for an *extra two months*. It certainly was encouraging to find favor in the eyes of the authorities and get comments like "Keep that magazine coming."

With over 29,000 copies of the English *Plain Truth* going into this

# BLACK AFRICA *Continued*

country, the Work in Nigeria is growing.

Lack of hygiene is just one of the many major problems facing Nigeria. Thousands of years ago God told ancient Israel, when bringing them out of Egypt (like Nigeria, a land filled with its customs, cure-alls and traditions): "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Ex. 15:26).

Nationwide obedience to God's laws would bring what all people desire — radiant health, prosperity and happiness. This is the ultimate answer to Africa's problems.

As would be expected, the health and welfare of our Nigerian members and co-workers is very good, due to obedience to God's laws. They have experienced many miracles of healing and other blessings.

One Nigerian man from Benin City lost a good teaching job because of refusing to work on God's Sabbath. This posed no undue hardship because he has now started his *own* primary school and has been able to employ some of the Worldwide Church of God members.

Despite a few bookings on cancelled flights (which we were able to adjust in time), hotel accommodation mix-ups and reckless taxi drivers, we fared well in Nigeria.

## South Africa and Rhodesia

We left Nigeria from the city of Kano to go to Johannesburg, South Africa.

From there Mr. Jackson went to Mossel Bay in South Africa to conduct the Feast of Tabernacles for over 100 Africans.

I observed the Feast in Victoria Falls, Rhodesia, where over 70 members attended. At Victoria Falls, responsibilities were shared

by the managers of our office in Rhodesia — the first half by Mr. Peter Nathan and the last half by Mr. John White.

Victoria Falls presents an ideal millennial setting for the Feast. The awe-inspiring falls are 355 feet high and 5,580 feet wide, and the mighty sounds produced seem to continually praise God.

While visiting in Rhodesia, I stopped at a village school 100 miles from the city of Salisbury. I was the first American these young primary students had ever seen. Their English was very good, but they thought my accent was "funny." When asked if they knew where America was, no hands went up. But when asked if they wanted to go there, *all hands went up!* Although the school was not well equipped (by our standards not equipped at all), the discipline was remarkably outstanding.

## Zambia

After the Feast of Tabernacles, Mr. Jackson and I met again in order to continue the tour into Zambia. Though only a few short miles separated our Zambian members from Victoria Falls, they were unable to attend the Feast due to political border closings between Zambia and Rhodesia. Similarly, we were unable to visit members in Uganda because that country's borders were closed to American tourists.

Our Zambian members were very much encouraged by our visit. Even in the face of missing the opportunity of attending the Feast of Tabernacles, they knew God would continually bless them if they did their part (see Rom. 8:28).

From Zambia we went to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where we stayed two days. Here our visits were few, but very rewarding. One visit was with a man who was contacted in 1971 and missed in 1972. After traveling all night, he met us at 8:00 a.m. Sunday morning. After two

years of obeying God and diligently studying his Bible, the Correspondence Course and other literature, he was baptized and encouraged to continue serving God.

From Dar es Salaam we flew to our final stop in Africa — Nairobi, Kenya.

Since Kenya still maintains its wildlife, we spent part of one day on safari, taking pictures and enjoying the beauty of God's creation. Our visits in Kenya were very encouraging, including one with a lady whose husband managed a 40,000-acre ranch.

## God's Work in Africa

The Work of God continues to grow in this area of the world. The twofold commission of God's Church — preaching and publishing the gospel as a warning and a witness to the world (Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20), plus feeding the flock (John 21:15, 17) — is truly being fulfilled on the African continent. A vital aspect of the baptizing tour is the opportunity to visit with our members and prospectives in remote areas. As one member wrote me: "The inspiration drawn from the personal accounts of your experiences in God's Church is indeed immeasurable. We pray that God will establish us more firmly in His faith in these parts in times to come."

Those select few who are called today (in Africa and the rest of the world), and who continue to overcome, will be pillars in the government of God as kings, rulers, teachers and priests: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations" (Rev. 2:26).

Today, Africa is beset by much sickness, disease, pain and suffering. But soon it, along with the entire world, will enjoy Utopian happiness and rich blessings through obedience to God's laws. God speed the wonderful World Tomorrow!

— Roland Sampson