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# L'Oeuvre Française en Europe (The French Work in Europe)

# 10

## YEARS AFTER

**I**N THE ten years since Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, and Mr. Dibar Apartian, Director of French operations and voice of *Le Monde à Venir*, opened the European offices of the French work in Geneva, four churches have been established in strategically located areas: Paris, the capital of France; Lyon, the major industrial city in the South; Brussels, the capital of Belgium; and Geneva, Switzerland. At the time of this writing, two more churches are planned, one of which will be in the area of Brittany in western France. In this way it will be possible for a person living nearly anywhere in France, Belgium or Switzerland to attend services and hear sermons in French.

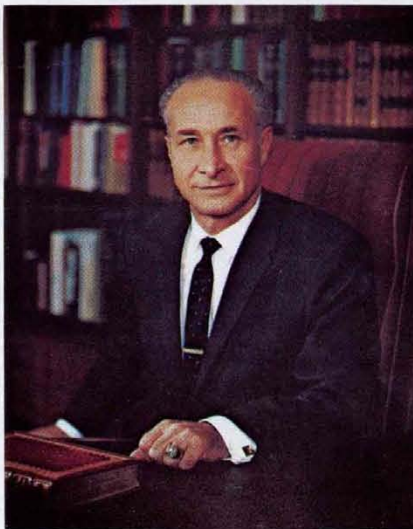
### The Poor of Lyon

If you were to have the opportunity of attending a meeting of the Church in Lyon, I am sure that you would be moved by a sense of history. To reach the hall where services are held, you might walk along the same cobbled streets trod by the "Poor of Lyon" (the early followers of Peter Waldo).

It was in this very city of Lyon

by Colin Wilkins

*Ten years have passed since the opening of the Geneva office of the Worldwide Church of God. Here is a report by the former office manager highlighting the subsequent developments of God's Work concerning the French-speaking peoples of Europe.*



Desmond Groves

Mr. Dibar Apartian

that Waldo, a wealthy merchant, decided to live according to the original gospel Jesus taught. And if you met the members of the twentieth-century Church of God, many could well be considered the latter-day "Poor of Lyon" (by comparison with some of us Americans and Britons who are very materially blessed indeed). However, I feel quite sure that if you were to meet them, you would not consider them to be in all ways "poor," but rather "rich" — in faith, that is!

Even with the two new churches some families must travel hundreds of miles to attend services. Families journey to Lyon from as far away as the town of Narbonne on the Spanish border and Nice on the famous Côte d'Azur, near Monte Carlo and the Italian frontier. A six- or seven-hour journey on overcrowded trains or a 300- or 400-mile trek in a small French motor car on roads which were built during the horse-and-buggy days is considered by the average Church member in France to be "par for the course"!

### The Paris Church

If you ever have occasion to visit France's capital city and were to ask

for the address of the Paris Church of God, you might be surprised to learn that it meets regularly in one of the best-known and most prestigious halls in the capital. The *Palais de Chaillot*, where 200 of God's people assemble, is a most imposing edifice in the city center. The Church gathers in the very same auditorium used on weekdays by leaders of the French government. If you should go there on a Saturday afternoon, however, you would hear God's minister in Paris — Monsieur Etienne Bourdin — speaking on the subject of *God's* government — not human government.

Monsieur Bourdin, a native Frenchman, responded to an ad published about eleven years ago in the English edition of *Reader's Digest*. As a result he began corresponding extensively with Mr. Apartian in Pasadena, California, and soon found one of his many talents being put to use in translating booklets, lessons of the Correspondence Course and, later on, articles for the French edition of *The Plain Truth* — *La Pure Vérité* — which was first published in June 1963.

However, Mr. Bourdin had other talents, too. After serving over eight years in the Geneva office as a translator, he was appointed pastor of the Paris Church in the summer of 1972. The previous minister, Mr. Carn Catherwood, was rapidly whisked over to Montreal to help take care of the burgeoning French-Canadian Work there.

Mr. Bourdin, assisted by his capable

wife Ursula, now does the lion's share of visiting inside of France. He also has the help of Mr. Audoin, another French elder, Mr. Bob Scott and others.

#### Legal and Financial Obstacles

For many years the French Work was severely handicapped by French law, and we were virtually prohibited from operating inside the country. Finally, thanks to the ingenuity of a member well-versed in the intricacies of the French legal system, we were able to form a cultural and religious association known as *Le Monde à Venir* (The

World Tomorrow) — the same title as our radio broadcasts. The association permits us to operate with much greater flexibility inside the country, and to transfer contributions from our French members and co-workers to Switzerland in order to finance the Geneva office.

Ever since the inception of the French Work in Europe, faithful French, Belgian and French-Swiss co-workers and members of God's Church have so generously donated to God's Work that they have been able to finance all French operations on the European continent, including the total costs of operating

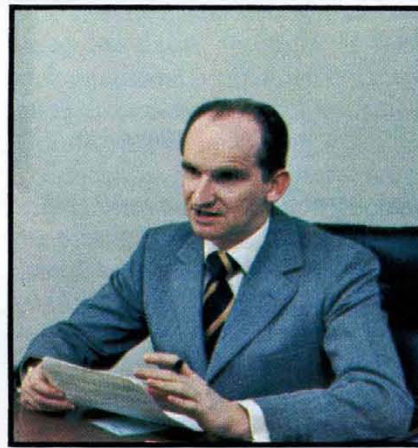
the Geneva office, our staff in Paris, visiting and ministerial expenses and the French festival site!

In the fall of 1973, over 1,100 French-speaking people attended the Church's annual festival at three separate locations: Quebec, Canada; the island of Martinique; and Praz-sur-Arly, France. Growth in Europe has been so rapid that we shall soon outgrow our present facilities. This, in spite of no longer hosting the French Canadians in Praz.

#### Le Monde à Venir

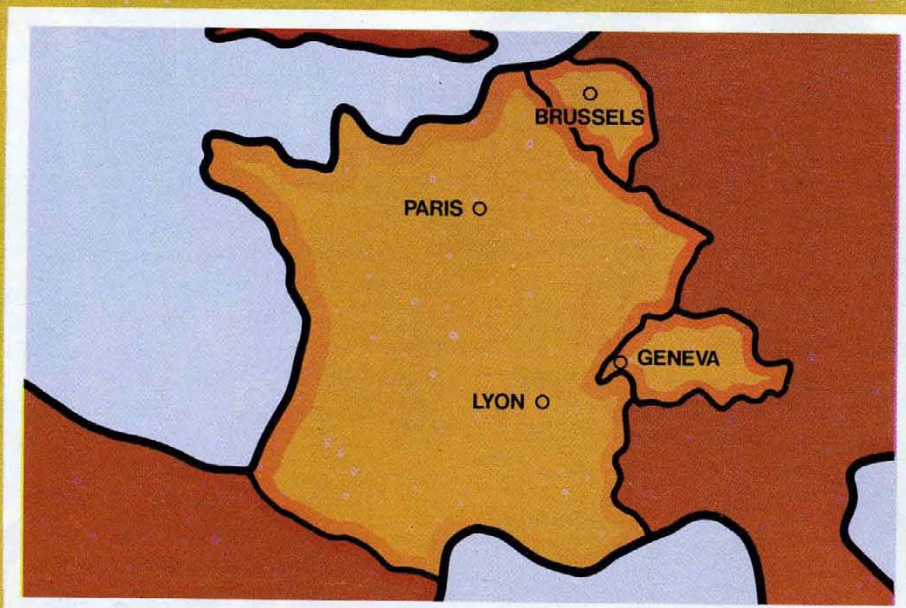
The story of the growth of the French Work in Europe is quite remarkable. It is hard to conceive of anyone turning his radio set on at 4:43 in the morning to listen to a 15-minute broadcast, yet many Europeans do just that! When *Le Monde à Venir* first boomed out on Radio Luxembourg and Radio Eu-

**Mr. Colin Wilkins** in his office in Geneva. Members (bottom photo) of the Brussels, Belgium, church are shown outside the Palais du Congress where meetings are held.



Good News Photos





Map — Greg Smith

## FRENCH-SPEAKING CHURCHES IN EUROPE

*The map shows the location of French-speaking churches at the present time. New churches are planned — one of which will be in the Alsace-Lorraine area of eastern France.*

rope No. 1 in the spring of 1961, it was aired at the relatively “respectable” time of 5:30 a.m.

I personally will never forget those initial broadcasts. At the time I was working in the fledgling French office on the English campus of Ambassador College in Bricket Wood, England. For six long weeks after our broadcasts were first beamed to France, Belgium and Switzerland, not a single letter was received. Mr. Apartian, anxiously waiting in Pasadena, told me later that he had begun to wonder whether anyone in Europe was listening to him!

Finally, a bulging transmittal envelope arrived from the Paris office of Radio Luxembourg. Inside were nearly 200 letters — the first of many large mail packets that were to be forwarded to us for processing over the years.

As the years went by, *Le Monde à Venir* began to be aired at even earlier times until, at the present, our program goes on at 4:43 a.m.! And yet the most remarkable thing is that we continue to get a very good response from these broadcasts. To date, more than fifty thousand letters have been received.

These early-morning broadcasts have been our only consistent means of reaching some 50 million

Frenchmen. On occasion we have been able to place ads in the French, Belgian and French-Swiss editions of *Reader's Digest*, as well as in a limited number of other publications in these countries. Results have been encouraging, but their extremely high cost does not permit us to use this outlet on a permanent basis.

We are also currently working on the distribution of the magazine through the newsstands; but, to date, we have met with great reluctance on the part of the French newspaper distributors to accept the totally new concept (for them) of an entirely free magazine which surpasses any of the publications their clientele is accustomed to paying for.

However, our Newsstand Department on the College campus in England is staffed by men we English call “the bulldog breed.” They love problems such as the one posed by the resistance of French newsstand operators. And, just like the bulldog, now that they have got their teeth into this problem, they aren't going to let go until *La Pure Vérité* takes its place in French newsstands alongside such well-known publications as *l'Express*, *Le Monde* and *Paris-Match*!

### Geneva Today

Our Newsstand Department in Britain isn't the only group which thrives on problems. Ever since I was drafted to Geneva to open the office there in November 1963, we have been facing obstacles. Many long-time *Good News* subscribers may remember an article I wrote for this magazine in 1964 entitled: “We Are in Geneva to Stay!” Even if you never saw it, the title should give you a hint as to the kind of difficulties we came up against in those early years.

Another chapter in the saga of the Geneva office was written in late summer 1972, when the Swiss authorities once again called into question the whole matter of our official status in the country and threatened us with expulsion, just as they had in 1963. This time we were again able to produce clear-cut facts to satisfy the Swiss Federal authorities in Bern. Actually, the government reacted so favorably to the information we gave them that we have been granted permanent status in the country and no longer have limitations placed on the engagement of our foreign (mainly *French*) personnel. At long last the Worldwide Church of God has obtained full approval from the Swiss author-

*(The French Work continued)*

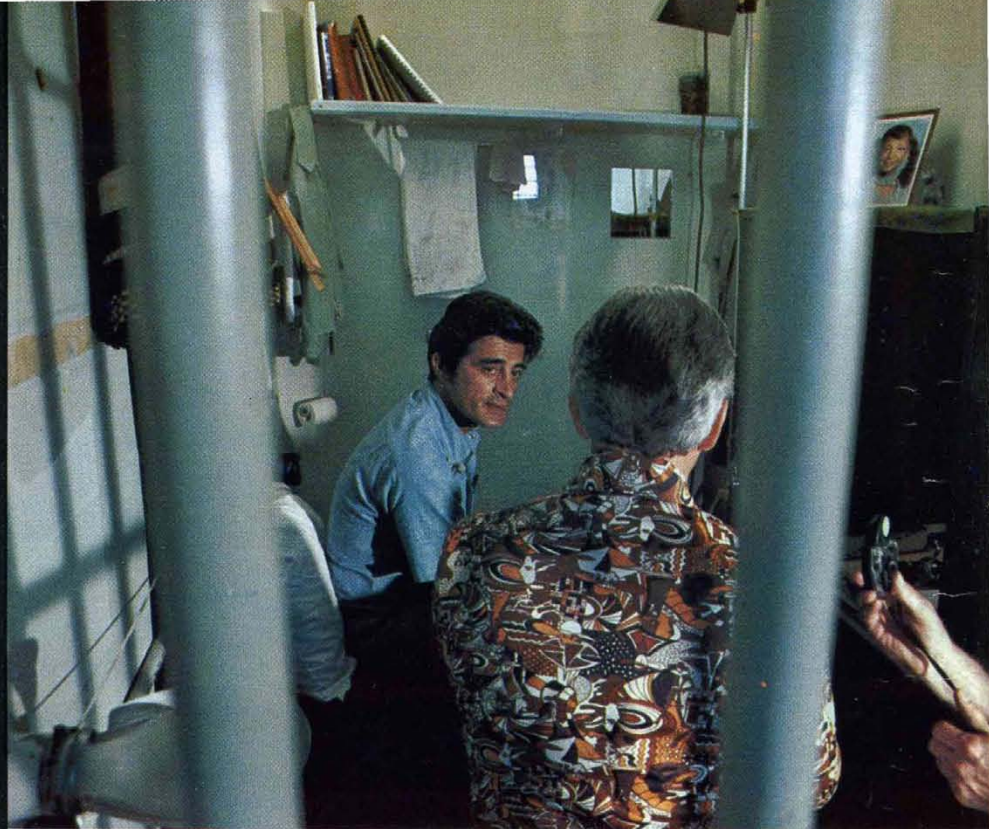
ities to preach and publish the gospel.

The supervisor of the Geneva office today is Bernard Andrist, a dynamic Swiss man who has a very warm personality. He has had considerable administrative experience, having worked in such diverse areas as the Personnel Division of Omega, the famous Swiss watch company, and as an area representative for a major shoe manufacturer in West Africa.

Mr. Andrist oversees the activities of a very enthusiastic team of people in our office in Geneva, half of whom are of Swiss origin and half, French. Our staff in Geneva processes letters from listeners to the broadcasts beamed into France, Belgium and Switzerland.

Geneva also receives mail from readers of the magazine from all over the Eastern Hemisphere. Our mail-reading staff satisfies requests for literature from such "faraway places with strange-sounding names" as Tananarive, Madagascar; Ougadougou in West Africa and Beirut, Lebanon. We have even received mail from students at Shanghai University in Communist China. A number of priests and nuns around the world are also taking the French Correspondence Course.

Future plans to serve the French-speaking people in Europe include the following: the organization of monthly meetings in one of the large cities in southern France (perhaps Marseilles); the extension of newsstand distribution into Switzerland; and the appointment of more Ambassador-trained ministers and assistants to live in France, Belgium and Switzerland in order to visit, teach and help the people God is calling in those areas. All this means that more French-speaking people will receive the precious spiritual food — the true gospel which has never before been available to them, nor to their French countrymen, since Peter Waldo walked the streets of Lyon seven centuries ago. □



Photos by Mike Hendrickson

## “I WAS IN PRISON... AND YOU CAME UNTO ME”

*“The experience of talking to many of these people leaves a feeling of sadness over the conditions in society which lead to this sort of crime.”*

**E**VEN though Jesus Christ never committed a crime or a sin, He made the amazing statement, “I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matt. 25:36). The people were perplexed and puzzled. “When saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee?” they asked. “Verily I say unto you,” Christ answered, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (verses 39, 40).

The modern Work of Jesus Christ is taking this instruction literally!

At year's end nearly 3,600 prisoners (and guards) receive *The Plain Truth* each month; nearly 1,800 are enrolled in the tuition-free Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course; and about 200 donors, co-workers and other interested prisoners receive this magazine, *The Good News*. A number of inmates are actively seeking membership in the Worldwide Church of God.

Two of those prospective members reside in Leavenworth Prison in northeast Kansas, where a regularly scheduled Bible study takes place on Wednesday evenings — conducted by Robert Spence and John Biedler.

According to Mr. Spence, “Leav-