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### They Will Be Lost! A Mission Survey Report On Liberia, West Africa

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Elvis H. Huffard

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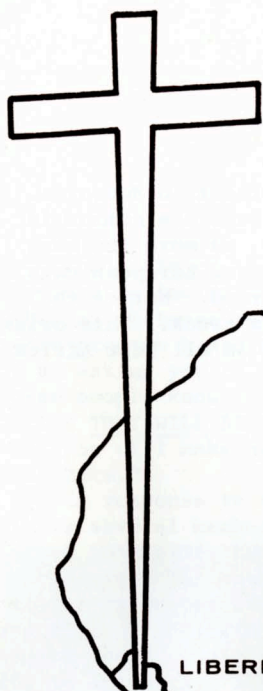
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# THEY WILL BE LOST !

## A MISSION SURVEY REPORT ON LIBERIA, WEST AFRICA

LIBERIA

By

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and

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A busy street in Monrovia. Traffic jams are common in the city, as more and more American and European cars are imported. Notice the Coca-Cola truck. This drink is found in all West Africa.

In contrast to the city, we see here a rural village. The thatched roofs are a common site in rural Liberia. Members of the Kpelle tribe live in these houses. We found the rural people very friendly.



The Providence Baptist Church on Broad Street in Monrovia. This is the first church in Liberia, and is called "the cornerstone of the nation." It was built in the 1820's by the first colonists. The Southern Baptist Convention has a strong mission in Liberia. Missions are scattered all over Liberia. Each mission usually operates a school and clinic.



# *They Will Be Lost*

The title of this report was taken from the following letter written by a Liberian listener to the Herald of Truth radio program heard over ELBC in Monrovia: "I am asking you to come over here and let these people know that if they don't do better THEY WILL BE LOST... Oh, I do hope that you will make up your mind to come over here."

In response to this request and many others, several members of the church of Christ in America have made brief visits to Liberia. The authors of this report, Dewayne Davenport from Kumasi, Ghana, and Elvis H. Huffard from Freetown, Sierra Leone, visited Liberia from July 26, to August 5, 1966, with the purpose of making a report to the brotherhood. The authors, along with all the others that had a part in publishing the report, send it out with the hope and prayer that it will stimulate interest among the churches of Christ and lead to another West Africa country being evangelized.

Liberia with a total land area of 43,000 square miles composed mostly of grassland and wooded plateau, is located at the extreme west coast of West Africa. The country lies within the tropical rainforest belt and during the rainy season (May until October) the rainfall ranges from 150 to 180 inches on the coast. The average daily temperature is 80 degrees F., with ranges from 100 degrees in February and March to 66 degrees in August. The humidity is from 78% to 82% on the coast.

Liberia is the oldest independent state in modern Africa and was founded in 1822 by the American Colonization Society. The purpose of the society was to settle ex-slaves from American to Africa. The first group composed of sixty people landed on Dozoa Island on January 7, 1822. After a few weeks they moved inland to the site of the present city of Monrovia. The island is now

called Providence Island and plans are underway to make it a national shrine.

In 1847, Liberia was established as a free and independent republic. Monrovia became the nation's capitol. The motto of the new nation was, "The love of liberty brought us here." William V. S. Tubman became president in 1944, and has remained in this office ever since. During his presidency more progress has been made than in all the years of the past.

The government of Liberia is modeled after the government of the United States, although there is no federal system. But there are three branches--executive, legislative, and judicial. The executive mansion, located on a commanding hill in Monrovia, is really the nerve center of the nation. President Tubman is looked upon as the "Father of the Nation".

The government officials have strong ties with different religious bodies. The president is a member of the Methodist church, and the vice-president, William R. Talbert, Jr., is a Baptist and is presently the president of the Baptist World Alliance. President Tubman has been very helpful to most of the missions that have started in his country.

The official population of Liberia is 1,016,000. Monrovia has a population of about 150,000. Of this number about 21,000 would be considered non-Liberians. The population of Liberia is composed of about twenty-five indigenous tribes.

The official language of Liberia is English. School children are taught English from the earliest grades although only one-fifth of the people can speak English. Missionaries who plan to live in Monrovia would find English sufficient to communicate with most of the people. But inland, knowledge of the local language would be very helpful.



The economy of the country has been influenced largely by the United States. Most of their imports come from America. U.S. currency is used. Attempts are now being made to change from a wholly agricultural economy to a diversified one. The agricultural products are rubber, rice, cassava, yams, plantains, palm kernels, pissava fiber, and coffee. Firestone has a rubber plantation near Monrovia that contains 90,000 acres with 12,000,000 trees, and employs 30,000 workers. Liberia is rich in minerals, iron ore being the most valuable.

Liberia has only a few miles of all-weather roads. The dirt roads are suitable for traveling in the dry seasons. Trails and waterways are still the only "roads" in many areas of the interior. The lack of roads has caused many missionaries and private companies to take to the air. The sea plays an important part in the life of Monrovia, the only free port in West Africa. Liberia's mercantile fleet numbers about 2,000 ships and is one of the world's largest. Liberia's four industrial railways covering 307 miles do not connect with any other country.

Radio is the most important news media in Liberia, for there are 125,000 radios, with four or five listeners per set. Monrovia is the only African city with three radio stations. They are ELBC, the Liberian Broadcasting System; ELWA, operated by the Sudan Interior Mission (S.I.M.); and VOA, Voice of America. ELBC operates on medium wave for Liberia at 10,000 watts and can be heard up to 600 miles. There are approximately 3,000 television sets in Monrovia and ELTV, operated by the government, is on the air four hours every night. ELWA is one of the strongest mission stations in the world covering most of West Africa in about forty different languages. The Voice of America located near Monrovia, is heard all over Africa and is the most powerful station on the continent.

There are three major newspapers: The Liberian Age, The Daily Listener, and The Liberian Star. Advertising is reasonable in cost, and they are very interested in the work of the missionaries.

Liberia officially has freedom of religion. Monrovia has scores of churches

representing most denominations, and it is estimated that there is one church for every 800 inhabitants. The majority of the people in the interior are still followers of their traditional animistic religions.

Missionaries are also engaged in education in Liberia. In fact, there is a government regulation that a new mission cannot start unless it will provide some type of school along with its religious work. Many denominations are starting churches in developing areas. The towns seem to be open to all comers.

#### HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN LIBERIA

Liberia has always been open to missionaries, yet the churches of Christ do not have a single man in this nation. The only bright spot in our activities has been the Herald of Truth radio program under the direction of the Highland Avenue Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas. Since 1961, Liberians and neighboring countries have been hearing this program over WLBC, radio.

Even though no direct conversions came from the radio program until visits were made by American brethren, the Herald of Truth has shown the way, "softening up" an unmanned mission field. Many listeners have been enrolled in Bible correspondence courses.

When we arrived in Monrovia, we associated ourselves with the Herald of Truth and immediately we were accepted. The church of Christ was not known, but the Herald of Truth was known in all quarters. We asked the director of the YMCA for a room in which to meet, and he responded immediately and advertised us on the bulletin board as associated with the Herald of Truth. One evening we attended the Rotary Club in Monrovia and were identified with the Herald of Truth. Many indicated that they were listeners to the program.

The program is well received among the professional radio men. One of the top officials at ELBC informed us that the Herald of Truth was the highest production quality. He added, "These people know what they are doing. The



program never has a dull moment and is full of go-go-go." No higher compliment could be paid a program.

#### FIRST CONVERTS IN LIBERIA

Charles A. Johnson and his wife were the first Liberians to be baptized. Charles is an accountant with the National Bureau of Investigation (the Liberian counterpart to our F.B.I.) He is a member of one of the interior tribes but has lived in Monrovia most of his life. His wife's father is from southern U.S.A. and her mother is from the Fanti tribe of Ghana. The Johnsons have four children.

In January of 1966, Eugene Peden, one of the pioneers in the work in Nigeria and now minister of the Lawrence Avenue church of Christ in Nashville made a short visit to Monrovia. Through information supplied by the Herald of Truth, he was able to contact Charles Johnson. Through this contact a Bible correspondence course was sent to him.

Three Nashville brethren, Roger Church, from Granny White, Copeland Baker, from Waverly Belmont, and V. M. Whitesell from Vultee stopped in Monrovia while on tour of West Africa. On May 19, 1966, shortly before midnight and after talking and studying with Charles and his wife, V. M. Whitesell baptized them into Christ in the Atlantic ocean. As far as we know, there two are the first ones to become members of the church of Christ in Liberia.

The most recent work done in Liberia was the survey trip made by the authors of this report. Huffard arrived in Monrovia on July 26 from Freetown, Sierra Leone and Davenport from Kumasi, Ghana on July 28. On July 28, they were joined by Jim Johnson of Ithaca, New York and P. T. Memefee of Nashville. Johnson and Memefee left after two days to join a group on a preaching tour in Nigeria. Huffard and Davenport stayed for one week.

One objective in this trip was to become better acquainted with the Johnson family and to establish them in the faith. Worship was conducted in their home on Sunday morning. We were very much impressed by both of them. Charles was constantly with us, as much as his job would allow.

A spot announcement was given to us following the Herald of Truth broadcast on WLBC, the newspapers gladly accepted our ads, as well as writing news articles about our visit, a room in the YMCA was given to us for three nights for conferences, and many tracts were distributed. Even though there were no visible results from our visit other than the encouragement given to the Johnson family, we do feel that the trip accomplished much in preparation for the future of the work in Liberia. We will be very happy to supply information in addition to this report, upon request. Several slides were taken in addition to the pictures in this report, and could possibly be shown by appointment. Send requests to Elvis H. Huffard, Freed-Hardeman College, Henderson, Tennessee.

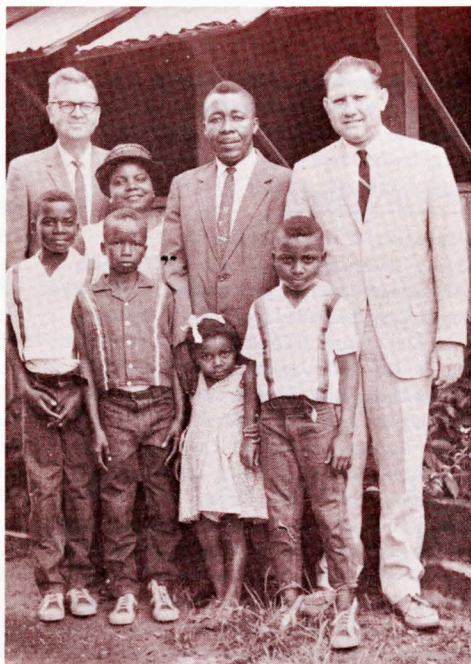
#### MISSIONS AND EDUCATIONAL WORK

Anyone going to Liberia must realize that the Liberian government requires all missions to establish some type of school. We must provide some type of school in order to establish a church in Liberia. The government seems to be more interested in what educational service you can offer than your religion. If one lived in Monrovia, it would be possible to rent a building in which to have both a school and the church services. This will cost a great deal, for buildings rent high in Monrovia.

There is a way to enter Liberia and not be burdened with a school, at least in the beginning. Liberia is in dire need of qualified teachers. A person could enter Liberia as a teacher and then, during off hours, work to establish the church. One such place to teach would be the University of Liberia in Monrovia. The university will take teachers with a B.A. degree, but the M.A. would be much better. A person teaching at the university would make about \$400 per month. It would be necessary for this salary to be supplemented by some congregation, as the cost of living is much higher than this. Full information can be obtained concerning the university by writing to Cornell University in New York.



Huffard and Davenport shown with the Charles Johnson family of Monrovia. Bro. Johnson and his wife are the first members of the church in Liberia.



Johnson and Huffard shown on a rural town street.

A village "head man" shown in his tribal clothes. This village is about 60 miles from Monrovia.





Cornell, through the USAID provides the University of Liberia with many of its administrators and teachers.

Another place to teach would be in the American Cooperative School. This is organized along the line of American education. This is the school where the missionary would probably want to send his children also. The yearly tuition is \$1000.00 and goes from kindergarten up to grade ten.

The San Francisco School System has a program in Monrovia called Monrovia Consolidated Schools. It would be possible to teach in this set-up.

#### THE COST OF LIVING

Liberia has one of the highest living costs for American missionaries of any nation in the world. Food is expensive and rent is high. One missionary estimated food cost at between \$150-200 per month for two adults. Utilities will range around \$150 without heavy appliances. Rent will cost anywhere from \$2,500 to \$5,000 per year, and this is paid at least one year in advance and sometimes longer. The cost of building an average size house is from \$20,000 to \$30,000. Local beef cost 80¢ per pound and a dozen eggs 85¢.

From the above figures, which may be low, it will be recognized that for a missionary to live and work in Liberia, a large salary and working fund must be raised. Elders must take all these things into consideration when deciding what support to give their missionary to Liberia.

#### WHERE TO START

Monrovia, or the interior, that is the question. The results would probably be quicker in the interior among some tribe. However, it has been our experience that it is easier to get set up and get a quicker start in the big cities. Everything being considered, it seems that Monrovia is the place from which to launch the work. After a church has been organized there, one could start visiting other places. Many contacts will come to the missionary in Monrovia and he can keep quite busy just following up on these. Tribal people in Monrovia will invite the missionary to go to their villages and preach, thus giving one the opening he is looking for in the interior.

If there are two missionaries, it would be good for one to concentrate on Monrovia and the other the interior. There will be enough work in Monrovia to keep one at work for an entire mission tour. The length of tours for missionaries vary in Liberia from two and one half years to four years. We would recommend not under two and one half and not over three years.

Your first step should be to write the Liberian Embassy in Washington, D. C. and ask for full information on visa requirements.

We have just learned that Roosevelt Wells visited Monrovia in June 1966 and baptized 48 persons.



