November 1963

More About the Missions ...

Kenneth J. O’Brien

Follow this and additional works at: http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq

Recommended Citation
O'Brien, Kenneth J. (1963) "More About the Missions ...," The Linacre Quarterly: Vol. 30 : No. 4 , Article 11.
Available at: http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol30/iss4/11
MORE ABOUT THE MISSIONS

KENNETH J. O'BRIEN, M.D.
NEW YORK

With the assistance of the Catholic Medical Mission Board of 10 W. 17th Street, New York, and at the request of Father Roland Bordelon of the Catholic Relief Services, N.C.W.C., B.P. 2479, Leopoldville, Republic of the Congo, I recently spent six weeks in the Congo. Besides rendering orthopedic care to the sick, an evaluation of the health needs of the Congo was made.

The Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville) is situated in central Africa. The country is approximately one quarter the size of the United States (excluding Alaska). It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the north, by the Democratic Republic of Congo on the south, by the Central African Republic on the west, and by the Republic of the Congo on the east. Leopoldville, the city that serves as capital, is situated near the mouth of the Congo River.

The population of the Congo exceeds 13,500,000 persons. There are more than 5,000,000 Congoese, most of whom are Catholic.

Contributors:


Readers interested in submitting abstracts, please send to:

Eugene G. Laforet, M.D.
170 Middlesex Rd.
Chesterfield, N.J.

LINACRE QUARTERLY
sonnel, and they lack medicines. Any breakdown of existing facilities is disastrous, since replacements are delayed or impossible to obtain. Transportation and procedural difficulties exist everywhere.

Malnutrition, anemia, intestinal parasites and malaria are nearly universal in the Congo. Other parasites and venereal diseases occur frequently. Leprosy is present in 10% of the population of some regions, as is tuberculosis. Hernia and fractures are frequent, and epilepsy prevails. Hepatitis and cirrhosis of the liver are noted. Maternal mortality and neonatal deaths are high. Congenital defects are seen fairly frequently.

Prior to independence, 780 physicians were working in the Congo, and still more doctors were needed. The total number of physicians at present is about 300 (many are W.H.O. doctors). There are about one dozen American physicians, all Protestant missionaries, devoting their time and energy to the sick at several hospitals in the interior.

Physicians of all types are urgently needed in the Congo. The Lovanium University School of Medicine needs a Public Health specialist and the many mission hospitals need general practitioners and specialists in all fields. Dentists are few in number. Nurses are needed for both teaching and administering nursing care. Ancillary medical workers can also help the needs of the Congo. Medical supplies are short. These include antelmintics, drugs for leprosy, antibiotics for tuberculosis and acute infectious diseases, surgical instruments and medical texts. Financial help is also being sought in order to obtain the above supplies and perhaps even to help pay transportation costs and support some medical missionary who is able to give his or her services for a year or more to this cause.

The medical needs of the Congo are unique in a way, since they offer many missionary opportunities for work at hospitals that are already established. These needs will decrease after several years, because of the expected increase in the number of graduating Congolese students of medicine and other health fields. Our request therefore is for immediate help to extend only over the next several years.


Review by Michael Kelly, M.D.
East Melbourne, Australia

The editor, Madame Claude Aragonnes, is cousin and intimate friend of Teilhard de Chardin. She has contributed portions of more than 124 letters from him to this book. Fifty-six were to his brother and 17 to his close friends Max and Simone Begouen. A further 39 to Teilhard's friend the distinguished palaeontologist, the late Abbé Breuil, give the work the correctly scientific atmosphere. In addition to her own touching narrative filling the gaps between the letters, the editor has included more than one footnote per page. Some of these are by translator Wall, who has added a short note by Teilhard's friend Julian Huxley, and translated into English a special appreciation of Teilhard by his lifetime friend and colleague, the Jesuit palaeontologist Pierre Leroy.

Teilhard de Chardin was a many-sided character; the book shows up well his love of God and mankind and his affection for all created things. Its title is remarkably accurate; truly Teilhard was a traveller. And while he travelled he made friends; and he kept those friends. These letters show more of the friend, the wise counsellor and the mystic than of the scientist. But he confided to his cousin and friend, his brother and his best friend everything which was in his heart. He developed a remarkable gift for understanding men. He spent four years in the trenches as a stretcher-bearer and he won the Military Medal and the Legion of Honour (later for his scientific work he was made an officer of the Legion of Honour).

He traversed China many times in every direction, by mule-cart, by caterpillar tractor, by train, and in the last few years once or twice by aeroplane. He was there from 1923 to 1946. A week after his first arrival he was off on an expedition for 1500 miles into the heart of China. In three months he was back laden with specimens. Most of his letters are written from different parts of the interior of China; he even went 3000 miles in 1932 as far as Kashgar in Sinkiang.

He quickly tabulated the results of his journeys and contributed them to journals (his total publications number 320). He was soon recognized as an expert, and confirmed this in 1929 by identifying the Peking man (Sinanthropus), an important link in human descent. After this he was off every second year to a world congress or with a scientific mission. Throughout this book he seems very mobile,