



-- FEATURES
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For French Radio Preacher
'Dieu est si Bon'

By Oscar Hoffmeyer Jr.

NEW IBERIA, La. (BP)--The assuring strains of "Dieu est si Bon" launches the unfolding drama of L'Heure Baptiste en Francais over 13 radio stations weekly throughout South Louisiana.

When Elie Woerner, a native Frenchman, speaks those words--"God is so Good"--he develops a special rapport with more than 200,000 of Louisiana's 900,000 French-speaking citizens in 18 parishes (counties).

The French Baptist Hour, first broadcast over Lafayette's KVOL in 1945 by a committee of Baptists, became part of the Louisiana Baptist Convention's mission program in 1955.

Woerner assumed direction of the program in 1973 and until recently produced the program in the cramped confines of a bedroom in his home.

Today, the energetic, witty, Frenchman packages the entire production when he begins the week each Monday morning in a new three-room, studio office.

He writes the script in longhand in French just as he will later preach the message. "I write eight pages in a notebook. This will last 11 or 12 minutes on tape," he explained.

Each item of the "Ordre de Service" is coordinated before he starts the taping. "Dieu est si Bon" introduces the program and is the theme song for the French Baptist Hour.

"Bibles, priere and visite" (Bibles, prayer and the invitation for him to visit) are offered to his listeners with the address for them to write requesting any or all of the three.

After "lecture de la Bible" (reading a scripture) and a "cantique (song) special" Woerner delivers the sermon and closes with "cantique d'invitation".

Woerner translates the text of each song prior to its being taped for the library. When he was in France three years ago he recorded a number of songs to be used on the program.

He tapes each program segment and splices them into a master tape, timed to 28 minutes, copies the master and sends it to the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth to be reproduced in multiple copies and mailed to the radio stations.

But Woerner's real love is not splicing taped programs. He is in the ministry of reaching people for Christ with a message of hope and love.

Responding to the 150 letters he receives per month without the services of a secretary consumes much of Woerner's time. Letters come from people in a wide range of professions and educational levels.

"Some of the people can't read, some have doctor of philosophy degrees, some are priests and nuns, and some are unrelated to any church, but the same words are understood by all," Woerner explained, giving some examples.

"I enjoy your French program very much. I've been wanting to write to you, but I don't know how to write," an elderly listener said. "So now I moved next to my daughter-in-law. She is the one who is writing for me. I would like for you to come and visit me and my sister. I would like to talk to you..."

Woerner said the elderly people in their 70's spoke only French and were ready to accept Jesus.

Some refer to this Baptist preacher as they would a Catholic priest; others write to request Bibles in English or French, which are sent without charge. One request came in "Dear Bible Company: Would you please send me one of your no-profit Bible."

When the spiritual needs are met the purpose of the program has been achieved. A letter voices this achievement: "My husband is 85 and sick so we don't go to church. I hear you and it does me a lot of good. Also I can't read or write and can't talk very much English, so this one other reason I enjoy your program so much, I can understand what you preach."

Woerner was educated in England and Wales and later (1957) at Wayland Baptist College, Plainview, Tex. He is the son of a French Baptist minister who is semi-retired living in Douai, France.

Woerner married the former Glenda Smith of McLean, Tex. They are parents of two sons, David, 17, born in Mamou, La., while his father was pastor of First Baptist Church, and Timmy, 15, who was born in France when his father was recalled to that country to fulfill a military obligation.

The radio preacher is still a citizen of France. Members of his family are citizens of both countries.

Because of his military obligation to France he was recalled in 1961 during the Nigerian crisis. "Everyone had to serve in the French Army, even priests," he said. While there, he served as pastor of English language churches.

Woerner has served as president of the European Baptist Convention (English language), as a member of the French Baptist Home Mission Board and as area secretary for the French Baptist Federation.

Louisiana Baptists provide support through the state's Cooperative Program unified budget and state missions offering for the French radio ministry and make no charges for any of the materials mailed or services performed. Even the air time is paid to each station.

The French Baptist Hour preacher has ambitious plans now that he can stretch his legs in the new studio.

He has been promised part-time secretarial help for next year to answer letters and mail Bibles. He plans more publicity for the program so more can hear the messages.

And he would like to initiate a cassette ministry that will be sent to listeners free as the Bibles are sent.



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September 20, 1976
RNA Elects W. A.
Reed to Presidency

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MINNEAPOLIS (BP)--W. A. (Bill) Reed Jr., religion news editor for the Nashville Tennessean, was elected here as national president of the Religion Newswriters Association (RNA), succeeding Richard Ostling of Time magazine.

Reed, who challenged the RNA in a 1971 speech in Milwaukee to make its membership fully racially inclusive, became both the first southerner and the first black to serve as RNA president. He is a Baptist layman.

RNA, organized 28 years ago, is made up of reporters covering religion for the secular press throughout the United States and Canada.

In other action, Marjorie Hyer of the Washington Post succeeded Reed as RNA first vice president and president of the RNA's Supple Board of Managers, which supervises the organization's annual national awards.

James Adams of the St. Louis Post Dispatch was elected second vice president and membership chairman of RNA, and Ben Kaufman of the Cincinnati Enquirer was elected treasurer of both the RNA and the Supple Board of Managers.

Reed, a veteran newsman, joined the Tennessean in 1961 and became religion news editor in 1965. He is a graduate of Fisk University and has done additional graduate study. He is also a former RNA second vice president.

The RNA met in Minneapolis in conjunction with the Triennial General Convention of the Episcopal Church, which the members covered for their respective news organizations.

-30-

(BP) Photo of Reed mailed to Baptist state papers.

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Illinois Baptists Vote Fund
Drive, Legislative Liaison

Baptist Press
9/20/76

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. (BP)--Illinois Baptists' board of directors, meeting in semi-annual session at East Bay Camp near here, approved a special \$1 million campaign to provide seed money for new churches, named a legislative liaison to the Illinois General Assembly and adopted a 1977 Cooperative Program unified budget of \$2.3 million.

In other action, the board of the Illinois Baptist State Association (IBSA) heard a proposal to purchase the 500 acre East Bay Camp, okayed purchase of a \$40,500 airplane for staff travel, approved a one percent increase in percentage of Cooperative Program funds going to the Southern Baptist Convention's worldwide missions causes, and authorized two new staff positions.

The \$1 million campaign for 1977-80, part of the denomination's "North Central Mission Thrust," is modeled after the SBC Stewardship Commission's "Together We Build" technique. It will be church-centered but also allow for direct approach to individuals or foundations, both in and out of the state.

The board enlarged the responsibility of Robert J. Hastings, the IBSA's director of communications and editor of the Illinois Baptist, to serve as a liaison with the state legislature.

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The role, a spokesman said, does not call for him to serve as a lobbyist but as a source of information only, leaving to the churches and the IBSA any initiative they may wish to take on legislative concerns.

Of a total annual budget of nearly \$4 million, the IBSA expects \$2.3 million to come through the state's Cooperative Program from participating churches, with the IBSA keeping 59 percent for its work and sending 41 percent, up one percent from 1976, to SBC causes.

The IBSA named a five-person committee to study the advisability of purchasing the East Bay Camp for \$335,604 and assuming a loan for the camp's sewage system of \$210,000.

Executive Secretary James H. Smith proposed the purchase and asked the board also to authorize construction of a \$750,000 year-around living accommodation and a \$225,000 multi-purpose building at the site.

Based on a study showing it would be more economical, the board approved purchase of the airplane from South Central Aviation, Inc., Springfield, with an agreement for a \$30 per hour lease-back to that company when not in use by IBSA staff.

The new staff positions involved authorization to employ a director of the state convention's foundation and an associate director for Sunday School work.

-30-

Bible Society Honors
SBC's Porter Routh

Baptist Press
9/20/76

NEW YORK (BP)--Porter Routh, completing 25 years of service as executive secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), was honored for distinguished service to the SBC and the Bible cause by the board of managers of the American Bible Society during its quarterly meeting here.

Routh, a member of the board of managers since 1967, was presented a specially inscribed copy of the "500th Anniversary Pictorial Census of the Gutenberg Bible," which contains pictures and descriptions of every extant copy of the Gutenberg Bible, the Latin Bible which was the major work and masterpiece of Johann Gutenberg, who invented printing with moveable type in the 15th century.

"Throughout the years Dr. Routh has represented us among Southern Baptists," Edmund F. Wagner, ABS President, commented at the presentation, "and he is largely responsible for the marked increase of support we have received from that denomination."

In 1951 the ABS received contributions from Southern Baptist churches totaling \$90,000. In 1975 Southern Baptist contributions totaled \$238,554. It marked the 12th consecutive year that Southern Baptists topped the list of more than 80 denominations and churches who support the Bible society each year.

-30-