

Livingston Update—December 27, 2019 *Voodoo or Vodou?*

Greetings from Lansing, Michigan, where there is no snow and the temperatures are very much like South Carolina. It is comfortable, and I will not be sorry if I do not need my boots in the next week.

In the last letter, I spelled the name of the spirit-worshipping religion as voodoo because that is the word most Americans know. However, the picture that comes to mind with that word is dolls with pins rather than the organized practice of worshipping powerful spirits other than God that is now recognized as a religion in Haiti. This religion has priests (*houngan*, sometimes called *bokor*) and priestesses (*mambo*), an extensive set of rules and practices, and has been called the people's religion.

“In the aftermath of the François Duvalier dictatorship, a number of individuals, including many houngan, sought to organize means of defense for Haitian Vodou from defamation by Christian missionaries and congregations. One of the first leading houngan to formally organize other houngan in solidarity was Wesner Morency (1959–2007), who established the Vodou Church of Haiti in 1998 (registered in 2001 by the Ministry of Justice) and the Commission Nationale pour la Structuration de Vodou (CONAVO). Another individual who has pursued the organization of houngan is the late Max Beauvoir, who established and heads the National Confederation of Haitian Vodou.” [This is from a good article about vodou from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haitian_Vodou] The practitioners in Haiti have complained about missionary “misrepresentation” of their spirits as demons, but if these spirits are not agents of the Most High God, then they are His enemies, and the label of demon is appropriate.

In the future, I will be writing the name of this potent religion of spiritual darkness as *vodou*. It is so easy to see what is around us and forget that there is a spiritual world in conflict, and that we are part of that battle. *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:11-12)

One resource available to all of us is prayer. The Haitian Christians have repeatedly said that they are blessed to know that you are praying for them. I heard from my missionary neighbors in Haiti last week. They were planning to return to the U.S. soon because of reports of possible problems in January and February. You already know about some of these, but here is the extra information.

- January 1, Independence Day—There have been calls for demonstrations against the government.
- January 6, Epiphany—This is the day for vodou re-initiation and fulfillment of contracts. The government has issued warnings about the increase of cannibalism and infant sacrifice.
- January 13—Terms of office will end for many of the deputies (similar to our congressmen) and senators, which means an end to the benefits of office and loss of immunity from prosecution.
- February 7—This will be the 34th year since the departure of “Baby Doc” Duvalier, and the first anniversary of the political unrest and violence. There have already been rumors of massive demonstrations planned for that day.
- Gang activity has spread to every part of the country, and now includes attacks on just about everyone. There are regular reports of people being robbed, beaten, killed and raped, and many houses and businesses have been burned.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints...” (Ephesians 6:18)

Thank you for praying!

In our Lord's service,

Dr. Anne