



JUAN ANTONIO
MONROY

An Autobiography


Translated by
Carolina Tolosa Archer

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 Abilene Christian University Press

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INTRODUCTION

In his 1939 short novel entitled *Nobody Ever Dies*, Ernest Hemingway wrote that memory is the most precious and wonderful gift in life. The fulfillment of our human life lies in the memories that we preserve in ourselves.

Our memory is the filing system of the past. We don't forget anything; everything continues to exist in our consciousness. Our memory is like a lighthouse that guides us through the stormy seas of life.

Memory and autobiography are two nouns with the same meaning. An autobiography is the story of a person's life written by himself or herself. It's the kind of work that needs to be done while one is still strong in spirit and capable of retaining and recalling the past.

I have never been one to believe that my life holds particular interest to others. Neither do I believe that my walk on this earth—my childhood, my family, my friends, the work God has allowed me to do—is significant enough to write about. Those who know me know that I have never advocated the sharing of my personal life. That aspect of my life has gone by almost unnoticed. Just like Jesus' mother, Mary, I have treasured in my heart both the small and great things that have happened to me (Luke 2:51).

Throughout my life, I have written fifty books; however, I do not talk about myself in any of them. I believe an autobiography to be the most delicate of all literary genres. People read a novel and they can either like it or not, but they don't normally argue about the content or judge the characters; they simply accept them. When you read an essay on history or a biblical commentary, you tend to accept or reject what is being proposed without arguing.

A biography is different. When people read about the life and deeds of another person, there can be many different reactions. Some may think the author is not telling the whole truth. Others may believe that the facts are being distorted or magnified. Theodore Roosevelt was elected as president of the United States in 1904. Nine years later, he published *An Autobiography*. The literary critics of the time said that the book contained many controversial pages and political attacks toward other politicians and that he wasn't telling everything he knew.

Writing an autobiography means being willing to let the reader into the most intimate aspects of your life and accepting diverse opinions, some of which will be favorable and some not so much. Nevertheless, it is a literary genre that is very much in vogue nowadays. Politicians, artists, singers, businessmen, and other celebrities are telling the world about their lives. In some cases, just as Jesus said, "they give what's holy to the dogs and cast their pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6).

You may be wondering, if this is how I feel about autobiographies, why I am writing my own. It's because I was almost forced to do it. Let me explain.

I have known six presidents of the Herald of Truth ministries.

The first one was W. F. Cawyer. He was president of Herald of Truth when the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, decided to support me in November of 1964. Cawyer was an older man, around seventy-five years old or more. He was the first person to talk to me about writing my autobiography. He said it was important that I do it so they could send copies to donors.

When Cawyer left Herald of Truth soon before he passed away, Clois Fowler took over the presidency. Fowler was president of Herald of Truth for many years. "You are a writer," he said to me one day, "please, lock yourself in your office for a while and write the story of your life. It can be a blessing to many people."

I didn't do it then, either.

After Fowler, Randy Becton assumed the office of president of Herald of Truth. I don't recall the year, but it was the month of March. Becton, Lou Seckler, and I traveled to Guadalajara, Mexico. Seckler and Alfonso Pastrana,

then representative of Herald of Truth in Mexico, organized a series of evangelistic conferences at the Carlton Hotel. I preached there three nights. We had about 800 people in attendance each night. One day Becton invited me to go eat with him, just the two of us. He talked to me about the same thing: my autobiography. I can't say if he was sincere or just trying to flatter me when he said I deserved the Nobel Prize in Literature. He also said that an autobiography signed by Juan A. Monroy could give prestige to the ministry.

I didn't pay attention then, either.

Becton eventually had some health problems and had to leave the presidency of Herald of Truth. Bruce Evans, a good, spiritual man, took his place. Each time we had the opportunity to see each other, Evans would insist that I write my autobiography; but he never put pressure on me.

Evans' successor, Steve Thomas, was the one who pressured me the most, both in person and by letter. On one occasion, he even said to me in a letter, "I will not communicate with you any more until you let me know you are writing that book."

Steve Thomas also left Herald of Truth, and I still hadn't written the story of my life.

All of these five presidents except Becton traveled to Spain to supervise my work and see how the radio ministry was working in my country.

The following is an anecdote involving Cawyer. Four elders from the Highland Church in Abilene came to Spain in October of 1965: Art Haddox, E. R. Harper, Hoyt Blodgett, and Cawyer. We were at the airport in Málaga, a city in southern Spain about 335 miles from Madrid, founded by the Phoenicians in the twelfth century B.C. I went to the airport office where they announce flight arrivals and departures. I asked a nice young woman there to please announce in English over the loudspeakers what I had written on a piece of paper. She did. When I went back where the others were, the following announcement could be heard throughout the whole airport: "Mr. Cawyer, please report to the police station immediately."

Cawyer was livid. He asked me: "Brother Monroy, what does this mean?" I replied: "You must have done something bad in Texas and now they're looking for you." In an almost desperate tone he replied, "I have done nothing wrong."

At that moment, Art Haddox, who knew what was happening, started to laugh. Cawyer was looking back and forth at each one of us. "What's this?" he asked again.

I couldn't keep from laughing either, so I had to tell him the truth: "Brother Cawyer, it's a joke!"

Very seriously, he replied, "I do not appreciate this kind of joke, Brother Monroy." It all ended there.

When Thomas left, Bill Brant took office as the next president of Herald of Truth. He did not ask me to write the story of my life, he ordered me to do it. Tired of me not listening to him for two years, he said to me in October of 2009, "Next year, you're not traveling to Cuba or anywhere else. You will stay in Madrid and write the autobiography we've been asking for."

So here I am. It's a job I do not like, but I will do it and will sincerely reflect everything that my memory is capable of remembering. I believe that nothing of what I will tell will interest the readers. But I may be wrong, and perhaps some of the experiences I've had in my long life may be of help to others.

Scottish philosopher David Hume said that it's difficult for a man to write about himself without vanity. I hope I don't fall prey to that negative and destructive spirit. Why would I? There isn't a writer who wouldn't consider himself among the best. I will leave vanity aside and try to stay true to myself. I write in the hope that anyone who reads this will not only learn from my failures but also imitate and give thanks to God for my possible victories.

1

RABAT, MOROCCO

Actress Barbara Hutton, the richest heiress in the United States in her days, said on one occasion, "Morocco is a fascinating country. It's full of wonders and surprises."

Barbara had a house in Marrakech, a very touristic city located in the north of the country and founded in the fourteenth century. Other celebrities from the United States and Europe own private homes in Marrakech as well. Winston Churchill, former first minister of the United Kingdom, also used to spend leisure time there.

Morocco is an Arab country located in North Africa between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. This country was already populated three centuries before Christ. It was always ruled by sultans or Arabian kings from various dynasties. The population lived through several centuries of civil wars. In the twentieth century, the European powers decided they would intervene. Through a treaty signed in Paris in 1923, Morocco was divided in two: a protectorate controlled by Spain in the north and a protectorate ruled by France in the south, which was the richer area of the two. From then on, many Europeans—especially French and Spaniards—decided to migrate to Morocco. Some were in search of adventure, while others looked for work to make a better living.

The capital of Morocco, once located in Marrakech and later in Fes, was then established in Rabat, some sixty-two miles from Casablanca. This city inspired the title of a great 1942 movie starring Humphrey Bogart and Swedish actress Ingrid Bergman. Rabat is located on the Atlantic coast of Morocco. It was founded in the year 1150 and has all the features of a European city, although it still showcases ancient walls and an old section called the Medina.

Morocco gained its independence from Spain and France between March and April of 1956. The first king of the new Morocco was Mohamed V; he was very much loved by the people. Today, his grandson Mohamed VI rules the country. Ever since then, the nation has developed considerably. Casablanca is the financial capital of the kingdom, whereas Rabat is the political capital.

My mother, Dolores, arrived in Rabat in 1926. Just like many other immigrants, she hoped to find the French area of Morocco called El Dorado. She came from a low-class family in Cádiz, the oldest city not only in the Iberian Peninsula, but in the whole Western European continent. Its origins date back more than a thousand years before Christ, and it still preserves ruins from the times of the Phoenicians. Because of its geographic location, Cádiz is also known as "the last city of Western Europe." Across from its shore is Morocco on the African continent. Cádiz is separated from Africa by the Strait of Gibraltar, which is thirty-five miles long and thirteen miles wide and serves as a merging point between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.

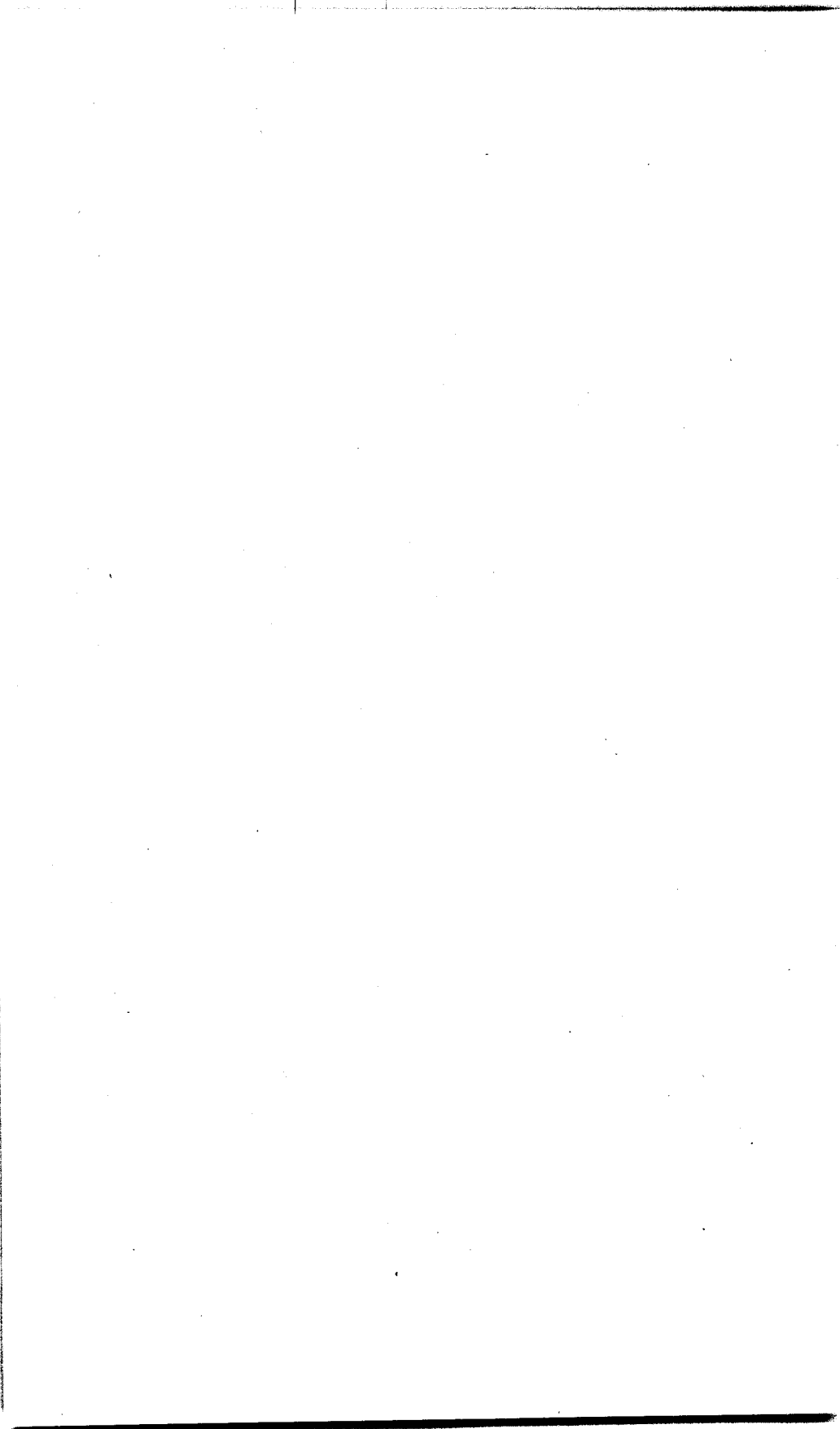
My mother did not find El Dorado in Rabat, but she did find Louis, a French architect who was working for the government. He was from Cherbourg, a city in northern France located on the bay of the English Channel. He studied architecture in Paris and was sent to Morocco soon after graduating.

The French man and the Spanish woman fell in love—my mother told me—and decided to get married. I was born there on June 13, 1929, in an Arabic culture, the son of a French man and a Spanish woman. Later that same year, Jacqueline Kennedy would be born on July 28.

All of my schooling was done in French until I was fourteen years old. From time to time my mother would speak to me in Spanish, but I was immersed in the French language and culture.

My father was an almost fanatic militant Marxist. In the section of our house set aside for books, only books about Marxism could be found. By the age of twelve, I had already read several books on the Marxist, anti-Christian philosophy. I was practically forced by my father to do so. I was a very early reader; I would go to bed with a book in my hands when I was eight or nine years old. That's why now I'm a writer and author of fifty books. Children who read a lot when they are young usually grow up to be writers.

Marxism did not hold any appeal to my mother at all. She was a nominal Catholic; she did not practice her religion. So, I grew up between Karl Marx and the Vatican, although atheism appealed to me more than religion.



2

LARACHE, TANGIER

My parents were married for fifteen years. They agreed to divorce when I was fourteen years old. It was my mother's fault. In Rabat, she met and fell in love with a single man named José, who coincidentally was from Cádiz as well, where my mother had been born. They started out as friends who would meet occasionally to share memories of Cádiz: the sea, the city liveliness, the lights. The human heart contains certain strings that are best left untouched, for we tend to follow the heart's lead and leave reason behind.

José and Dolores fell in love, and she decided to ask my father for a divorce. My mother remarried and took me to live with her and her new husband. José was an engineer who specialized in the operation of flour factories. He received a good offer from a company based in Larache—in the Spanish area of Morocco—and decided we would move there.

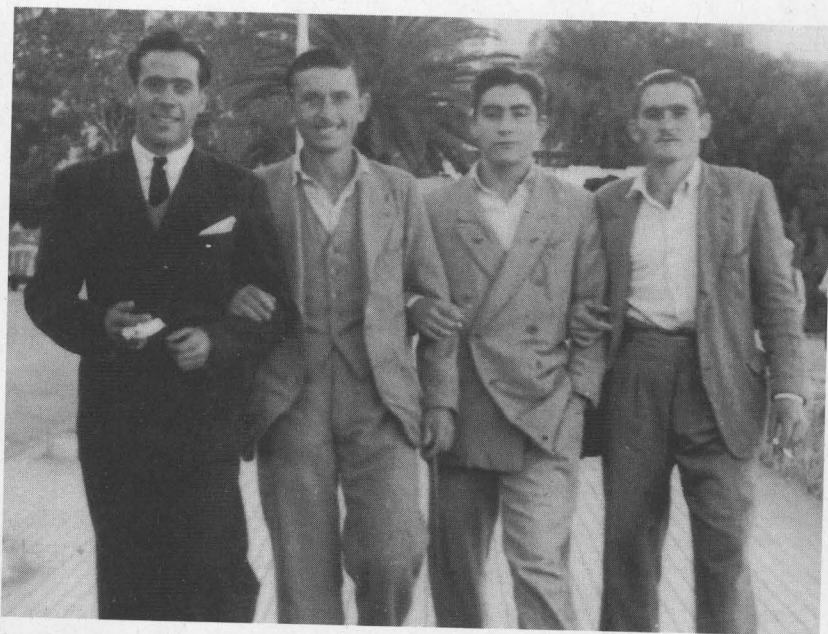
My mind, my heart, my soul, and my whole being are filled with sweet memories of Larache, where I spent my teenage years and first years as a young man. Larache is a city in the north of Morocco, on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Five hundred years before Christ, the Phoenicians built a commercial settlement there called Lixus, which later belonged to the Carthaginians

and then to the Romans. The Romans established an important colony there, which reached its peak during the times of Emperor Claudius.

Legend has it that the Garden of the Hesperides, the three daughters of Atlas, was located in Larache. This is where Heracles found the apples that made him immortal. A wonderful ocean view can be seen from what's known as "the balcony of the Atlantic." The Spanish protectorate turned Larache into a significant military post.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the wisest presidents the United States has seen, once said that the person who speaks two languages is twice a person.

I was perfectly fluent in French when we arrived in Larache, since all of my schooling from age five to fourteen was done in that language. I also spoke Arabic regularly and was able to improve my skills while in Larache and Tangier. I knew very little Spanish. My mother and my stepfather signed me up in a Spanish school. Before long, my diligence in my studies and my daily contact with Spanish kids allowed me to be able to communicate without difficulty in two languages: French and Spanish.



Juan Monroy at age sixteen in Morocco in 1945 (second from the left).

While my biological father was Marxist, my stepfather was a fanatical atheist. In our house, there were books written by famous French, German, and English atheists and translated into Spanish. Was I destined to be an atheist? Both men who were an influence on my education had the same belief, or lack thereof. Coincidence? I don't know.

I was eighteen years old in 1947. It was then that my parents decided to leave Larache and move to Tangier, a city that offered more promising economic conditions.

Tangier is a different story. I must explain the features of this unique city. The location of Tangier is strategic. It's situated on the northwestern corner of the African continent and separated from the Iberian Peninsula by the Strait of Gibraltar, only seventeen miles away from the Spanish city of Algeciras. A two-hour boat ride from Algeciras puts us in a different world—an African, Arabic, Muslim world. Open-air markets sell fruit, vegetables, bread, as well as colorful, flavorful spices. There are small coffee shops on terraces where, at dusk, dozens of men—not women—drink tea and smoke their *kif* pipes—a mixture of cannabis leaves and tobacco that makes a fine powder less strong than marihuana. A variety of shops sell candy, clothing, and trinkets; men wear *chilabas*—the traditional Moroccan tunics—while women wear colorful clothing, some of them with veils covering their faces. Children run and hop in the streets and around the shops, and water vendors announce their merchandise. As I said earlier, it's a different culture, a different world, a different civilization. It's Africa. It's Morocco. It's Tangier.

According to history, the Carthaginians founded Tangier in the fifth century B.C. Throughout the centuries Tangier went through numerous Roman and Vandal invasions. In the year 638 of our era, the city was occupied by Muslim Arabs.

Due to inter-tribal wars in Morocco, which greatly affected Tangier, several of the international powers decided to intervene. In 1912, Tangier was isolated from Morocco and declared independent. It stayed under the control of a government that consisted of Moroccan, English, French, Italian, and Spanish authorities.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and World War II broke out. This posed serious problems for the political administration of Tangier. France was occupied by Hitler's troops. Italy was Germany's ally. Spain got along well with Hitler and Mussolini. The United Kingdom was being continually bombarded by German planes. What was to be done? It was impossible for delegates from conflicting countries to agree with each other on how to rule a city.

Then Spain, which ruled over all the northern area of Morocco considered its protectorate, decided to intervene. Francisco Franco's army occupied Tangier in 1940 and added it to the other cities of the protectorate. Once the war ended, Spain withdrew and Tangier went back to international control until 1956, when Morocco declared itself an independent nation.

When my parents decided to leave Larache, Tangier was at its financial peak. Hotels were being built, new companies were being established, new businesses and banks were being opened, and the money circulated freely.

During those times, Tangier was a large city, cosmopolitan and rich. But it was also a den of spies and smugglers. American writer Paul Bowles knew the city very well and defined it as "the most vicious city in the world." Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, Allen Ginsberg, Malcolm Forbes, Barbara Hutton, and other literary celebrities, movie stars, politicians, and economists also lived in Tangier for extended periods of time. Frenchman Jean Genet also used to spend time in Tangier. He passed away in Larache and was buried in the old European cemetery there.

I arrived in this city in 1947.

Just as happens with some women, or certain books, we owe moments of joy to some places, joys that we remember for the rest of our lives. I experimented many happy moments in Tangier. The most important, overwhelming, and powerful of all these moments was the joy of my conversion to Jesus Christ. I will tell about this in the next chapter.

3

MY FIRST CONTACT WITH CHRISTIANITY

Here I was in Tangier, a city of many cultures where three major religions coexisted: Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam. The Muslim community made up the majority.

It was 1950; I had already turned twenty one. I was a normal young man, living an almost completely pure life, if you will. I didn't smoke. I didn't drink. I despised drugs. I have never tried drugs, not even during those young years when I was surrounded by such a corrupt environment in Tangier.

I have read about and heard many testimonies of converts who would place special emphasis on the dark side of their past lives, on how evil they used to be, and on the evil things they used to do, portraying a rather cruel or inhuman picture of themselves. Perhaps they were trying to highlight the power of God at work in their lives.

That wasn't my case. Books were my only vice. I would spend hours reading in the Spanish and French libraries in Tangier, which were very well stocked, by the way. It was in these libraries where I wrote a book that was praised by the Spanish newspapers: *La Biblia en el Quijote* (*The Bible in Don Quixote*).

At that age, I had already read about Marxism and atheism. The atheists who inspired the French revolution of 1789 especially appealed to me: Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, Buffon, and others whose works I read in the original French language.

I would occasionally publish articles in the local newspaper, *La Depeche Marocain*, and use the opportunity to attack religion through them.

Then the day arrived: Friday, October 27, 1950. A conversion to Christ means experiencing an internal revolution that can never be forgotten—like the blind man in the Gospel of John: “I was blind, but now I see!” (John 9:25), or like the prodigal son: “He was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Luke 15:24).

These three illustrations paint an accurate picture of the process of conversion. A person without Christ is blind, lives in darkness, and is dead in his own sins and crimes. A person without Christ is lost for eternity.

That describes my state until that moment. I was blind and Christ gave me light. I was dead and Christ gave me life. I was lost and Christ sought me and found me.

When those who were once baptized abandon the church and lose their faith, more often than not it's because they didn't have a real and profound conversion experience. To convert means to regenerate, to receive the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins, to experiment the delights of the faith, to acquire a sense of certainty in life, to live with the hope that one day we will go through the gates that lead to eternity.

Conversion can be a slow process or a sudden one. Philip had been with the Lord for three years, but he didn't really know him in depth (John 14:9). All Paul needed was three days to be baptized and transformed into God's chosen instrument to carry the name of Christ to the gentiles, to the children of Israel, and to the kings of the world (Acts 9:5-19).

My conversion was very much like Paul's. It happened in the course of three days.

In Tangier, I had a friend whose name was Pepe. He was Catholic, a very spiritual man. He had been attending some Christian services for a while. I

ran into him that Friday and he said, "I want to invite you to come with me to an Evangelical church tonight at 8." I replied, "Me? Go to a church? Pepe, you know I am an atheist."

He didn't give up. Rather, he insisted, "Nothing will happen just because you attend a religious service once. I don't think you would lose your faith in atheism."

It was raining that day in Tangier; I didn't have anything else to do that afternoon, so I agreed to go with Pepe.

The place was small, no more than fifty people could fit in it. A tall young man was standing at the pulpit. I later learned that he was a twenty-eight-year-old Cuban married to an American woman from Minneapolis.

They sang some hymns. Two men prayed. Another one read the Bible. Then they sang some more. All of that was strange to me; I liked it, but I didn't feel anything in my heart. The man in the pulpit read the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians and preached about love.

At the age of twenty-one, you know a few things about love, just like you do at forty-one and at seventy-one. Love knows no age; love is born, but it never grows old.

He spoke about God's love the whole time; but he spoke of the kind of love that is beyond all knowledge and the human mind cannot comprehend. This kind of love moved God to give his Son to be sacrificed on a cross to make our salvation possible and lead us on the path to salvation.

I was restless. I was under the impression that this man was speaking to me. My heart was beating faster.

When the service was over, I went to him, introduced myself, and told him I was an atheist who lived my life without religion and was not interested in religious topics. Nevertheless, I asked him when the next service would be.

"Tomorrow," he said, "at the same time. And at eleven on Sunday. Will you come?"

"We will see," I replied.

After the service, I told Pepe I was going home; I wanted to be alone. I lay on my bed thinking about my situation. What if God really existed? What if

atheists were wrong? I had read books that spoke against the Bible, but I had never actually read the Bible. I knew what they said about it, but I didn't know what the Bible itself said.

That night I could not sleep. My mind was racing. I hoped the new day would arrive soon, and it did. I was standing at the door of the small church, early. I went back the next day, which was Sunday. The preacher offered an invitation after the sermon. He asked if there was someone who wished to give his life to Christ. I raised my hand and stood up. I couldn't tell if it was me or a strange force compelling me to do it.

Years of Marxist and atheist instruction fell at my feet, defeated by a higher power. The kind of happiness I felt was unknown to me. My mental faculties were very much awake. I didn't question what was happening to me; I was certain that I was making the right decision. I was opening my heart to God's love. This was my first contact with Christianity.

4

BAPTISM FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF MY SINS

There were several Muslim mosques in Tangier at that time, as well as three Jewish synagogues, four Catholic churches, one Anglican church, and a Reformed French church.

Rubén Lores came from a Christian family in east Cuba. He was white with black, wavy hair, a descendant of Spaniards, tall and attractive. He studied in an evangelical school for five years in his native country. After he graduated, he accepted a scholarship to continue his education at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. He learned more about the Bible there, and he also learned to speak English fluently. It was in that school that he met a student named Dana, from Minneapolis. Dana's father was an elder in the Christian Church, a man loyal to the principles of the Restoration Movement.

Dana's father seemed to be a rich man. When Dana and Rubén got married and expressed their desire to move to Morocco to preach the gospel, her father decided to help them with monthly financial support.

When they arrived in Tangier, they immediately began planning their evangelistic efforts. The population exceeded the housing capacity at that time in Tangier. Rental places were expensive. Rubén approached the pastor of the

Reformed French church to ask about the possibility of using the church's premises. It was a small place. The French worshipped only on Sunday afternoons; so, in exchange for a reasonable amount of money, they let Rubén use the room on Sunday mornings plus two more days during the week.

Because the Reformed Church practiced the christening of children instead of baptism of adults by immersion, this meeting place did not have a baptistery. Rubén believed in baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, just as his father-in-law had taught him. So, for my baptism, he spoke with the manager of an important park, which served as a gathering place for upper-class people. The name of the park was Parque Brook, located across from the Consulate of Spain. There was a large pool surrounded by tables and chairs where people could eat and drink.

It was one in the afternoon. A group of about fifteen of us went to the park. Consulate officials and other public figures—all of them Catholic—witnessed my baptism against their will. Wearing a white gown, I went into the water. Rubén had asked me to recite by memory one or two verses of the Bible before being baptized. With the strong voice God has granted me, I started quoting so many passages that Rubén soon put me under the water so that I would finally be quiet.

We later found out that a complaint had been filed by the Catholics who were present at the time. They complained to the manager of the park, who was Jewish, for having allowed "the Protestants" to use the pool during their meal time.

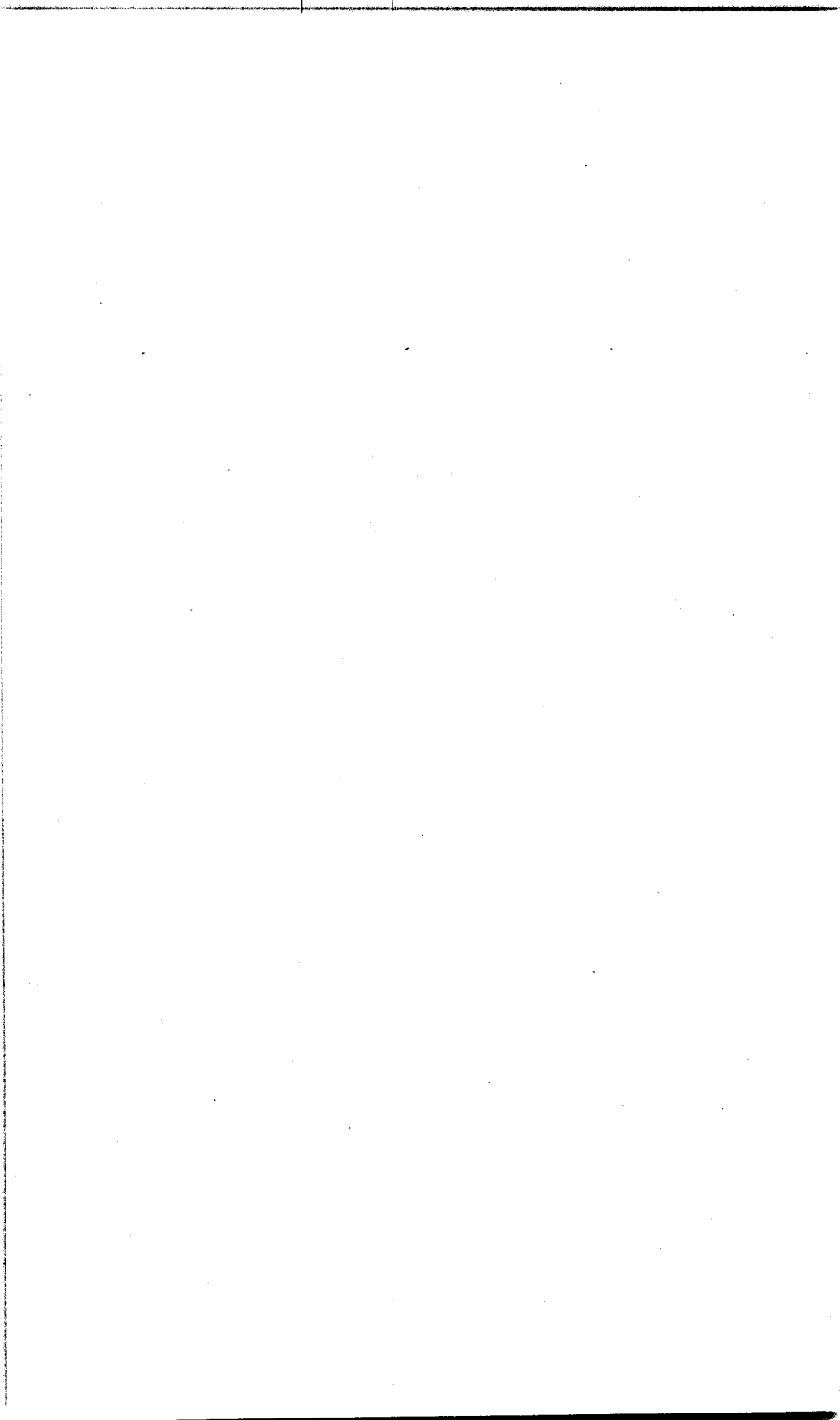
I began preaching that same afternoon. Four of us got together and went out to the streets of Tangier to give testimony of our faith. Occasionally, we would stop at a corner to sing and to preach. I was beginning to read the Bible, but I knew very little about it. I preached nevertheless. I would tell people about my conversion to Christ from atheism. This was almost sixty years ago. But I'm still preaching, with more knowledge and more faith.

When I got home that night, I spoke with my parents about my experience of conversion and told them that I was now a Christian. They did not want to believe it.

"You are an atheist," my father said.

"You need to stay away from those people and live your life like before," my mother said. Then she added, "Take some time off and give it some more thought."

I didn't need to give anything any more thought. I knew whom I had believed. Three years later, I baptized my mother at the beach in Tangier. My father was also baptized later by another member of the church. I wasn't in the city at the time.



5

EXPULSED FROM SPANISH MOROCCO

As I have said before, during those years Morocco was divided into two areas plus an international city. France ruled over the south, where the most significant cities were Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, Mequinez, Agadir, and Marrakech. Spain ruled over the north. The prominent cities there were Tetuán, Larache, Arcila, and Alcazarquivir. These, however, were smaller and less developed than the cities ruled by France.

In the north, Tangier was a completely independent city, ruled by several countries. This arrangement lasted until 1956, when Morocco gained its independence from Spain and France and merged the territories, including the city of Tangier, which then ceased to be an international area.

I wished to give my testimony of Christ to many of my friends in Larache. Two weeks after my conversion, I suggested to the preacher that we go to Larache. He was excited about the idea. So, one morning we started our way to the city I loved so much. The preacher took me and three other young men in his car. We cheerfully sang songs on our way. We carried fliers and other free literature to distribute. Our first stop was in Arcila, some nineteen miles from Tangier. We began distributing fliers there. I can remember this as if it

happened yesterday. I had given a flier to an older man and was speaking with him when a Franciscan monk came and snatched the flier from the man. With my usual quick temper and slow judgment, I gave the monk a harsh look and said to him, "Give me that flier back right now. If he doesn't want it, let him say so himself."

The monk threw the flier to the ground and threatened me before leaving, "You will hear from me again." And sure enough, I did. He went straight to the police station and made a formal complaint against us on the basis of proselytism. Not long after that, two Spanish policemen arrived and took us all to jail. A few hours later, we were set free. Perhaps because I was considered to be the most dangerous in the group, I was the only one who was informed that I was being expelled from the Spanish protectorate of Morocco for anti-Catholic activism.

And so it happened. I could not enter the territory of the Spanish protectorate for six years. In 1956, after the country gained its independence, the decree was overturned by the Moroccan authorities. Of course, I went back to Larache, where I rented a facility and started a congregation. A few of its original members still worship there. Some of their descendants now live in Barcelona, Málaga, Madrid, and Germany, among other places.

6

IN FRANCO'S ARMY

In March of 1951, six months after my conversion, I joined the army. I was Spaniard because I had chosen to have Spanish citizenship. Military service was mandatory in Spain. Every young man twenty-one years old had to “serve his country”—as they would put it—for a year and a half.

I went to the Spanish consulate in Tangier. I remember the official who helped me; his last name was Torres. He went over my records and, after noticing that my father was French and I had been born overseas, he informed me that I was actually exempt from having to serve in the military.

This kind of news would have meant a gift from heaven to any Spanish young man. But in my case, it left me a bit confused. I wanted to serve in the army. Moved by my young faith, I thought it would be the best place to share my beliefs with hundreds of young men from all over Spain.

I spoke with the preacher, with some friends, and with my parents. They all advised me not to go. My father was the one who opposed the idea the most. “You have no idea what the army is like,” he said, “it’s very rough. And since you are Protestant [as he would call me] it’ll be worse for you. Priests are the ones in charge there. Don’t go.”

After hearing many opinions, I followed the voice of my conscience. I returned to the embassy and told Mr. Torres that I had voluntarily decided to join the Spanish army. He was as wide eyed as anyone can be.

"Are you sure? Have you thought about it?" he asked.

"Yes, I want to go."

"Why?"

"To serve the country and to preach the gospel of Christ."

"Be very careful," he warned me, "you will have a rough time."

Torres was one of the officials who had witnessed my baptism in the park.

When the time came to leave, they took us in a boat from Tangier to Algeciras. We went by bus from Algeciras to Cádiz, where they put us in another boat to Santa Cruz de Tenerife, in the Canary Islands. It took three days of slow sailing to get there.

During my stay in the army, I was able to serve the Lord, but I also had bitter experiences. In order for the reader to comprehend and assimilate the painful experiences I had to live through, I will need to explain with some historical background what that Spanish army was like back in 1951.

By the twelfth century before Christ, the Phoenicians and the Greeks had made their way into the Iberian Peninsula. The Carthaginians and Romans arrived later. In the year 711 A.D., the Arabian Muslims crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and invaded most of the territory of Spain. This marked the beginning of a long process of reconquest that lasted until the fifteenth century. It was then that the Spanish crown defeated the last of the Arabian troops in the city of Granada, south of Spain. Immediately after this, the Inquisition was put in effect, imposed on Spain by the Vatican. This led to the expulsion of both the Arab and Jewish populations.

In order to understand the great influence that the Catholic Church has always had in Spain, it is necessary to keep in mind what the Reconquest was all about.

Shortly after the Muslim invasion, in the first half of the sixth century, Pelayo, a warrior from Asturias, began a war in the north of Spain against the Arabs. This war took place over seven centuries and had a two-fold purpose.

The main purpose was a patriotic one: to defeat those who had come and taken ownership of Spain. The second purpose was a religious one: to combat Islam, which was imposed forcefully on a Christian territory.

Ever since then, nation and church have remained as one in Spain. This is what has been called the cross and the sword, God and Caesar, Catholicism and nation. Spain is a country that has remained one with its mother, Rome. No king or consulate or any other authority has been able to do without the power and burden of the Catholic Church. The church has come to rule over everything.

On July 18, 1936, a group of generals under General Francisco Franco, initiated a revolt against the established government. A civil war that lasted three years was a result of this revolt. About one million people died in this war. Franco was a friend of Hitler's and Mussolini's, so he counted on the help of Italy and Germany. His other powerful allies were the Vatican and the Catholic Church in Spain. Franco was appointed "leader by the grace of God" by the Catholic cardinals. Had he not had the assistance of the powerful German and Italian armies, this grace would have been of little use to him. Fueled by the Catholic Church, this war was called a "crusade" because it had a religious goal, as did the military expeditions against infidels and heretics in the Middle Ages.

The Spanish Civil War was won not only by Franco but also by the Catholic Church. Following its victory, the church established its power and took an active role in politics, the economy, and the social aspects of Spain, dictating oppressive laws on morality and freedom.

All this led to the development of what became known as *Nacionalcatolicismo* (National Catholicism). The State was considered divine, as if God were a Spanish national. The State would delegate to the church all investigations, education, press and radio control, labor unions, and political parties. The Catholic hierarchy established an iron censorship on every social stratum.

Spain then had a population of thirty million, of which only 25,000 were Evangelicals belonging to various denominations. A very important thing to keep in mind is that, to the Catholic Church, they were not evangelicals; they were Protestants, heretics, and descendants of Luther. Anyone who would

call himself a Christian but wasn't Catholic would be labeled as Protestant. I am a Christian, not a Protestant. But neither the church nor the government would understand it that way. I will refer to myself as Protestant in the next few chapters, not because I believed myself to be one, but because I was Protestant according to the government, military, and Catholic authorities. Juan A. Monroy, Protestant.

A fierce persecution broke out against evangelicals in Spain from 1939 until the mid 1960s. Three pastors from the Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal churches were murdered. Most church buildings were closed down. Fines were imposed for having religious meetings in family homes. Anyone handing out a flier or testifying about Christ to friends or family members was put in jail. Soldiers who did not attend Mass on Sundays were locked up in a prison cell. Employment was not given to evangelicals. Civil matrimony was forbidden. The bodies of evangelicals were buried on the outskirts of cemeteries, in places called *corrales*. Children of evangelicals were discriminated against in schools. Young evangelical men and women were not allowed to attend college. The publication of any kind of evangelical literature or flier was not possible. Bibles sent from the United States or England were confiscated. Evangelicals were not allowed to be government officials.

I have documented these and other violations in a book that I published while I was outside of Spain in 1958. The book was titled *Una defensa de los protestantes españoles (A Defense of the Spanish Protestants)*. It was translated into English and published immediately in London, and it circulated among embassies of numerous countries.

In April of 1948, President Truman signed a law, which contained the European Recovery Program—also known as the Marshall Plan—to promote the reconstruction of Europe after the devastation of World War II. By Truman's express wishes, Spain was excluded from this assistance. He publicly declared that he was not willing to use U.S. funds to benefit a country where religious freedom was not practiced and evangelical Christians were persecuted.

This is the Spain in which I voluntarily enlisted to serve in the army. I never kept my faith a secret. No, I gave testimony of my faith at every

opportunity that came to me. I was still cautious just as my father had advised me. Nevertheless, I could not avoid the long, hard whip of religious intolerance. I will tell more about this in the following chapters. I understand that to the American reader who has always lived in a country with freedom, the events I will describe may come as a surprise. Nevertheless, each one is as real as the blood that runs in our veins. They are as authentic as the sun that brightens up our days and the moon whose light makes our nights less dark.

THE CANARY ISLANDS

The Canary Islands are an archipelago made up of seven islands located in the Atlantic Ocean. Sixty-two miles separate the islands from the coast of Morocco on the Greenwich meridian.

What we know today about these islands dates back to the second century A.D. Many expeditions by Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Italian explorers to take control of the islands have been recorded since the fourteenth century. In 1492, Christopher Columbus made a stop at one of these islands on his way toward the American continent. Around 1478, the king and queen of Spain started a warlike campaign to defeat the native inhabitants—known as *guanches*—and take control of the Canary Islands. Spain's final conquest of the islands took place in 1496.

The archipelago consists of seven islands: Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, La Gomera, El Hierro, and La Palma. Today these are modern, developed, and highly touristic cities. Businesses and luxury hotels have been built on their beaches. Because the islands enjoy spring-like weather all year long—68/78 degrees Fahrenheit—millions of tourists from all over the world come to the islands every year, mainly from Europe and the United States.

In 1951, Spain had a Marine Corps battalion in Santa Cruz, the capital of Tenerife. The headquarters were in the city itself on an avenue by a sea-front boardwalk. Crossing the avenue, the sea was only sixty-five feet away. On the outskirts of the city, there was a boot camp called Hoya Fría, about six miles away. This is where the new recruits were trained for three months before they were assigned to the city headquarters. Hoya Fría was a cold, inhospitable place with barrack huts in an empty field.

When the boat that took us from Cádiz docked in the port of Santa Cruz, army trucks were already there waiting to take us to Hoya Fría. My heart sank when I saw all that. They put us in huts that housed a hundred soldiers each. There were bunk beds against the wall; one soldier slept in the top bed, the other in the bottom. Beside the bed, on a masonry shelf, each soldier had a small cabinet where he could keep his personal belongings, but they didn't have a lock. They provided us with tin plates, cups, spoons, forks, and knives, plus two sheets and a blanket.

Shortly after we arrived, the bugler announced the *fagina*, or dinner time. Dinner consisted of no more than twenty lentils floating in a bowl and an orange. Spain was a very poor country back then.

There I was, a very educated young man who spoke three languages and had come from a thriving international city. Sixty percent of the soldiers in that military post could not read or write. They were from towns in the interior of Spain. I thought quite a bit that night. I wondered whether I had made a mistake or had done the right thing when I voluntarily enlisted in Franco's army. It was too late to go back, anyway.

The instructional time began two days later.

The Catholic religion was part of the military training. On Sundays and Thursdays, it was mandatory for all soldiers to attend Mass. Once a week, the Catholic chaplain would give us a lecture praising the values of his religion. Everybody had to be present, including the higher rank officers.

As soon as it was possible, I requested the chance to speak with the sergeant closest in rank. I told him I was Protestant and wished to be excused from Mass. He gave me a negative answer, but I wasn't discouraged. He told

me, "Very difficult, boy. Attendance at Mass is mandatory. I suggest that you don't tell anyone here that you are Protestant."

How could I silence my faith when I had specifically come here to share it?

The prayers of my brothers back in Tangier were being heard in heaven. The first two Sundays, I got detention in the barracks and had to do cleaning chores in the morning. It was fine with me; I would do anything to avoid kneeling before a religious image.

I insisted on not attending Mass until I was able to speak with the captain of the company. He was a relatively young man who had been educated in the military academy, and very different from the one whom I had to be under after my pledge to the flag. I will speak about him later.

The captain showed some understanding; his response was the same as the sergeant's. Mass was considered a military act; to be a conscientious objector, it was necessary to go through some time-consuming procedures. He dismissed me and promised he would speak with the commander-in-chief of the regiment, someone whose last name was Machado.

He kept his promise. Shortly after my request, he let me know that after reviewing my case, the colonel had agreed to release me from the duty of attending Mass. Due to a different incident, I had the opportunity to meet and speak in person with Colonel Machado. He was extremely Catholic, but he also showed profound respect toward other people's beliefs. He was a military man who practiced his profession with integrity, justice, and impartiality. I was very fortunate to have completed my military service under his command. There were so many lunatics in barracks all over Spain that was dominated by *nacionalcatolicismo*. Anyway, the prayers of my brothers continued producing positive results.

I didn't have any more problems until the day we had to pledge allegiance to the flag—a story I will tell in the next chapter.

8

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

The pledge to the flag is considered one of the most solemn events in the Spanish army. It takes place once the recruits' training has come to an end. In this ceremony, soldiers make an oath to submit to the military discipline and to faithfully fulfill their duties to the country.

The pledge to the flag is usually a public act and entails great solemnity. The unit's chief cries out, "Soldiers! Do you swear in God's name, or promise by your own conscience and honor, to faithfully fulfill your military duties, to keep and to enforce the Constitution as a fundamental standard of the State, to respect your superiors and never desert them, and—were it necessary—to give your lives in defense of your country?"

The soldiers reply out loud, "Yes, we promise!"

The one who pronounced the pledge replies, "If you fulfill your pledge or promise, your country will be grateful and reward you; otherwise, you will deserve its contempt and punishment as unworthy children."

When I voluntarily served Spain in Franco's army, the country was under the control of the Catholic hierarchy, whose power was much greater than all legislative, executive, judicial, and military powers. Therefore, the pledge to the flag was defined as an act that intertwined the "noble and higher ideals

of religion and country." In accordance with this feeling, the strictly military pledge to the flag was followed by a religious ceremony. At the appointed place, an expedition altar would be erected and Mass officiated, with the troops standing in previously designed formations. Once Mass was over, the recruits would come up front, walk before the flag, and kiss the cross that had been laid out there.

This was my acid test.

I was aware of the upcoming date. I spoke with the sergeant, with the lieutenant, and was even able to reach the captain. I expressed to each one of them how I felt. I would do the pledge to the flag but I wouldn't attend Mass. At the sound of the bugle, I couldn't kneel down before a Catholic altar. I told the captain that the colonel of the regiment had already excused me from Mass attendance. I appealed to the principle of conscientious objection. Nothing could be done. Those military men, who—word had it—had crushed the enemy army twelve years earlier, still continued to crush everything. A Catholic Mass was part of the pledge to the flag, they argued; attendance was mandatory.

Placing my trust in the Christ who had changed my life, and expecting much from the prayers of my brothers in Tangier, I risked everything on one venture. I attended the parade, I pledged allegiance to the flag, and once the military ceremony had concluded, I abandoned formation and set out to headquarters. I heard the sergeant calling out, "Monroy, come back to formation." I did not obey. The lieutenant arrived—seemingly more nervous than I was—and with a few words I filled him in on my situation. He ordered me, "All right, go to headquarters. We will talk tomorrow."

I obeyed. I was feeling relieved and afraid at the same time. That act of rebellion could mean years in jail. I knew it because I had researched the topic and knew of other cases.

The next morning arrived.

I was summoned to a meeting with the lieutenant and the captain of my troop. What had happened? Had prayers made it to the heart of the Eternal God? Did Christ watch over the life of a man who was willing to carry his name to many places in the world? Did the lieutenant and the captain not want to

spark off a conflict with the soldier who had arrived to the Canary Islands from the international city of Tangier to become part of the Spanish army? Did they speak with Colonel Machado? Did they come to terms with the fact that my attitude was honest and I was moved by a matter of conscience?

I don't know. All I know is that it happened. The captain said that I had not done the right thing by disobeying my superiors. My attitude entailed a jail sentence. The lieutenant intervened in my favor saying that my deserting the formation had really gone by unnoticed among many people. I was forgiven by the captain with these words: "Only for this time we will not punish you, although what you have done is very serious. Try not to take part in another spectacle like this again."

"I won't. At your command, sir," I replied.

"One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep speaking, do not be silent'" (Acts 18:9). I took that as if it had been written for me.

I was spared severe punishment. Others weren't. Fourteen years before this incident, another soldier who was a Jehovah's Witness was executed in Jaca, Aragón, for refusing to pledge allegiance to the flag.

Antonio Gargallo Mejía was born in Madrid in 1918. He was converted to the Jehovah's Witnesses when he was nineteen years old. Shortly after, he was summoned to join Franco's army. When the time came to do the pledge to the flag, he informed his superiors that he could not do it for two reasons. His faith didn't allow him to take an oath to defend a government "of this world," and he couldn't participate in the Catholic ceremony either. With threats they tried to convince him to change his mind, but he didn't. He deserted the army by fleeing to France. He was detained and brought back to his unit, where a military jury condemned him to die. He was executed by firing squad on August 18, 1937, in the middle of the civil war. Catholic priests and military chaplains heard about this death sentence but did not do anything to stop it. "One less heretic," they may well have been thinking.

Shortly before dying, Gargallo wrote a letter to his mother: "I have been detained and have been condemned to die without even a chance to be listened

to. Tonight I leave life on this earth. Do not worry or cry, for I have obeyed God. After all, I am losing very little; the Lord willing, I will be going into a new and better life.”

The soldiers in the firing squad later reported that on his way to be executed, Antonio was singing hymns of praise to the Lord.

In that Spain of the 1950s, where the priests' cassock and the military uniform were one as in a marriage relationship, Protestant soldiers went through a real ordeal. Many young Jehovah's Witnesses, Adventists, and faithful members of other denominations suffered for years in the cells of military camps. Their only crime was refusing to participate in the Catholic ceremony of the pledge to the flag. The Catholic Church hierarchy still hasn't given any signs of regret or asked for forgiveness for all the violations against helpless soldiers who had different religious beliefs from theirs.

9

THEY THINK I'M A SPY

Once the training period in Hoya Fría ended, we were transferred to downtown Santa Cruz, more specifically to the San Carlos infantry barracks. Yes, I am an infantryman, a nurse in the infantry. During my time in Hoya Fría, I claimed that I wasn't in favor of shooting guns. They decided to appoint me a nurse. During training times, I was one of the four who would hold the stretcher carrying another soldier who would either scream as if he had been wounded or play dead. However, I wasn't excused from shooting practice. The instruction sergeant once said to me that I was brilliant in theory but a disgrace in actual target shooting.

The barracks where we had been transferred were on the Marítima Avenue; I believe back then it was called José Antonio Avenue. Things were different there. *Radio Macuto*—mouth to ear—had worked beautifully, and now everyone in the barracks knew that Monroy was a Protestant. Furthermore, they knew about the incident that I had starred in during the pledge to the flag. I befriended a corporal from Seville who had spent many years in those barracks, enlisting and reenlisting. I do not recall his last name. In a private conversation, he said to me, "Watch your back, Monroy, this is not Hoya Fría. There are officials here who are sincere Catholics and can make you miserable."

It wasn't really that bad, but there were a few incidents. I must say that the army, the government, the civil authorities, the police, and other key organizations received daily reports from Catholic associations that specialized in this kind of issue. They had the support of the section of the church that handled information about Protestants. Those reports would describe us as heretics, Masons, enemies of Spain, allies of Moscow, communists, and anti-Spanish. When I wrote the book *A Defense of the Spanish Protestants*, whose first edition was published in Tangier in 1958, I dealt with this type of ill-fated literature.

Most of those career military men—victorious in the civil war only twelve years earlier—believed everything that the Catholic church said about us; to them, being in the presence of a Protestant was like being in the presence of the devil himself.

I was summoned one morning to the flag room. When I went in, I saw a large table and three chairs. A major was sitting at one corner of the table and a captain at another corner. I had never seen either one of those men before. Later, I learned that they belonged to a special intelligence and information division. I was ordered to take the chair in the middle. I did so, after having saluted them properly. I was bombarded with questions for about an hour and a half, questions that covered everybody from my grandparents to my friends, what kind of contacts I had with Masonry, what religion my parents practiced, whether or not there were other Protestants among my relatives, why I had become a Protestant, why and for what purpose I had decided to voluntarily join the army, and other questions like these. I can't recall all the details of what happened that long ago. But I do remember very clearly that they would take turns asking me questions, like they do in movies about spies. One question would come from the major, the next from the captain. That first interrogation session lasted one and a half hours. The same thing happened the next day, and the day after that. They never pronounced a threatening word or mentioned anything about punishment. The only pressure I had to bear was the pressure of the interrogations.

After three days of questioning, they never bothered me again.

The attitude of these high-ranking officials was understandable. I was different from the others in the troop. I spoke three languages: Spanish, French, and Arabic. I had come from Tangier, which was known as the main den of spies in the world during World War II. To complete my negative profile, I had voluntarily joined the army. Putting myself in their shoes and thinking the way they did back then, the interrogation sessions made sense.

I never saw the captain and the major again. I think that the report they wrote cleared any doubts that the higher-rank officials might have had about me.

The captain of my troop was the one who always remained doubtful. More than just doubtful, he was convinced that I was an international spy. My mind has not cared to keep a mental record of his name. But his image has remained engraved in my mind: tall, strong, rather large, barely educated. I knew he had been a corporal in charge of the cleaning when the war broke out. Through merit, he made it all the way to the rank of captain after having killed countless enemies. He was a comical man, at times he even seemed naive to me. He had not been able to get rid of the cleaning-corporal mentality.

One week day, I requested permission from the lieutenant on duty to return after 10 p.m. I would do this frequently in order to meet with my brothers in Christ in the capital. I was never denied permission. That night, I returned half an hour early and I leaned on the wall of the boardwalk to look at the ocean. All of a sudden, two strong hands on my shoulders startled me, and I heard the captain's voice, which I knew very well.

"I caught you, Monroy."

"At your order, my captain."

"What are you doing here?"

"I was looking at the ocean. I have permission until ten."

"No. You are sending signals to some ship out there. Come with me."

So he took me to headquarters and gave an order to his assistant: "Write a report on Monroy." I had a handkerchief, a few coins, a small New Testament, and some fliers.

And he insisted: "You have to tell me what you were doing out there."

"Nothing, my captain. I was just looking at the ocean at night."

"All right," he concluded. "Go, and we will talk tomorrow."

The next day, at dusk, a soldier was looking for me and calling: "Monroy, Monroy, the captain is calling you!"

I went before him. I stood to attention. The captain was drunk, but his mind was manufacturing ideas.

"Let's see, Monroy. Explain to me who this Luther was."

I tried to give him a testimony of my conversion, but he interrupted me like Felix did with Paul, saying: "Go now, we will talk some other time."

I walked away from him, but he did not get too far from me all the time that I stayed at the barracks. Since he was the captain of my troop, we saw each other frequently, like every ten days when he came to give me my pay: five *pese-tas* and fifty *centavos* per day. This was the equivalent of five American cents.

10

CONTROVERSY WITH A JESUIT

The military chaplain is a priest with military rank who practices his priesthood in the army. He carries out every necessary ecclesiastical service for Catholics. He has broad faculties to forgive sins through confession. All chaplains are under the military bishop.

As a priest, the chaplain must be respected. As a military man, he must be obeyed. In my fifteen months as a military man—also known as *mili*—I had small disputes with two chaplains.

One dispute took place in the dining room of the barracks. The chaplain would give a lecture on Catholic doctrine once a week at 6 p.m. Although the day, time, and topic were announced insistently, very few soldiers attended; attendance was voluntary. As usual, the bugler announced the meal time that day. When we were taking our places around the tables, the chaplain showed up. He ordered the servers not to distribute any food until after he finished the lecture he had prepared. He explained that, as an exception, he had adopted this new measure because very few soldiers attended his classes. He had us all trapped in the dining room. There wasn't a way out; his trap worked. He forced us to listen to him before he let us eat.

Standing on a table, the chaplain—who was a Jesuit—gave his lecture. When he finished, he did the sign of the cross. Whether my luck was good or

bad, I don't know. It just happened that I was sitting a few feet from where he was. He could see me clearly. I remained cross-armed. He ordered: "You, boy, get up."

I knew that he held the rank of lieutenant. So I saluted him: "At your service, lieutenant."

"Do the sign of the cross," he said.

"No, sir. I will not," I replied.

"Is it because you don't know how to do it?" he insisted.

"Yes, sir," I continued. "But, what do you want me to do it for?"

"So that God will deliver us from bad thoughts."

My reply was quick, "Will God deliver me from the bad thoughts I am having at this very moment against you for making me do something I don't believe in?"

In that moment of the dialogue—or whatever that could be called—I heard the thundering voice of the captain of my troop. I wasn't aware of the fact that he was on duty that day. He was moving forward in the hallway toward the chaplain.

"Father, Father, that's Monroy, the Protestant."

Upon hearing this, the lieutenant addressed me with respect.

"Are you Protestant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"You didn't ask me."

"All right," he replied. "I will be expecting you in my office tomorrow at five."

"You have gotten off scot free this time," the captain said to me looking as if he wanted to strangle me.

My fellow soldiers congratulated me for having stood up to the chaplain, whose untimely arrival had interrupted our supper. Many told me that once they returned home, they would find out if there was a Protestant church in their hometowns. I do not know if they did or not, or whether any of them eventually was converted to Christ, but I fulfilled my purpose. I planted the

seed of the gospel among the troops, and now they knew that there were Protestant dissidents in that Spain that was dominated by the Catholic clergy.

I continued talking with the chaplain for five days in a row. He was very nice to me. He never tried to coerce me. He explained to me the Catholic doctrine and gave me several books, which I read. He put himself at my disposal in case I wanted to consult him. Even though he was a priest and a military man, his attitude toward me was exquisitely kind. Was he interested in knowing the doctrines of Protestant Christianity? I never found out.

THREE MONTHS IN JAIL

I didn't come out of my second run-in with a chaplain as well as I did in the first one. One morning, at breakfast, Lieutenant Soler came to us. He was on duty that day. He said that a very upset man had come to the barracks. His house was close by, and his wife was in urgent need of a transfusion. He thought one of the soldiers could give blood for her. The lieutenant explained that he was not going to force anyone; rather, if there were any volunteers, they should step forward. I was the first one to do it. Others joined in. They took us to the hospital where the sick woman was. My blood type was the same as hers. I never knew how much blood they drew.

Later, I was summoned and congratulated for my gesture. It was ordered that I be given double portions of food for a week. Why would I want more! One more portion of that food was enough to be poisoned! I got sick. I was taken to the military hospital, where I stayed for six days. I put the Bible and the songbook I used for my devotional times on a night table by the bed. One of the nuns approached me and asked:

"What book is that?"

"It's the Bible."

"The good one or the bad one?"

"It's a Protestant Bible," I replied.

That woman moved away from my bed as if she had spotted leprosy on my body.

"Are you Protestant?"

"Yes, sister."

"Where are you from?"

"From Tangier."

"Is everybody there Protestant?"

"No, most people are Muslims. There are also Jews, Catholics, and some Protestants."

She didn't give up.

"Why are you Protestant?"

"Because I was converted in a Protestant church."

For three days, she insisted that I speak with the chaplain. I finally agreed to do it. He was a lieutenant colonel. Once I was in his presence, I let him know that, if we were to discuss religion, it would have to be as equals, leaving rank aside. He accepted and we talked for three afternoons. In spite of my almost nonexistent theological and biblical knowledge, not even one of his thoughts had any impact on me. I had read some books on Catholic-Protestant apologetics and therefore had an answer for all his arguments.

The day I left the hospital, the chaplain was at the door talking with other officials. He literally said to me, "Monroy, I will pray for you and your complete recovery."

And pray he did. Boy, did he pray. He filed a report to the General Headquarters and requested that I be put in jail for proselytism. Two days later, back in the barracks, the sergeant of my troop informed me that the commander in chief of the regiment wanted to see me. I wasn't afraid, but I could imagine something bad. I stood to attention before Colonel Machado, who was aware of my blood giving. I stood up the whole time.

"What happened in the hospital, Monroy?"

"Nothing, colonel. The chaplain wanted to talk with me, so we talked."

“Well, he has filed a report with General Headquarters asking that you be put in jail for proselytism.”

I explained to him that I had only talked about my faith with those who had asked: the nuns and the chaplain. In the report that the colonel received, I was being condemned to three months in jail “for practicing proselytism in the hospital.”

They didn't lock me up. I was sent to the Hoya Fria camp again, to break rocks. Among those being punished was a soldier whose last name was Brito. He was the goalie for a soccer team in Las Palmas. He was serving a sentence for having deserted in order to train. I spoke with him about my faith. I prayed with him; he liked that. On several occasions, he asked to pray together. He gave his life over to Christ. When he returned to Las Palmas, he placed membership in an evangelical church. The hospital chaplain sent me to Hoya Fría because there was a soul in need of salvation there. One month after I was arrested, I was pardoned—supposedly by the colonel—and I went back to the San Carlos barracks in the capital.

12

OTHER INCIDENTS IN THE BARRACKS

I didn't stay still or quiet at the barracks. I trusted in the Divine protecting power. And that gave me strength. I was living my first love as a Christian and nothing posed a threat to me. I knew, as one saying goes, that he who does not make up his mind does not get to ride the horse, and I was there for the ride.

Among all the incidents I faced in the following months, two of them stand out.

The captain of the company, as I have already mentioned, was a rough, vulgar man, sometimes rude and sometimes funny. The room where I slept was large, with twin beds placed on either side. Small wooden wardrobes painted in blue sat on top of cement stands. There was one at the head of each bed. Mine was almost by the entrance. At the back of the room, there were beds and wardrobes that nobody was using at the moment. I would put fliers and a few small New Testaments in one of those wardrobes. One morning, the captain came to check the beds and the wardrobes. Each soldier stood to attention in front of his bed with his back to the wardrobe, which was supposed to

be open. The captain began the inspection. When he reached the end of the room, it occurred to him to open the vacant wardrobes. When he found my collection of heresies in one of them, he yelled, "Monroy! Where's Monroy?" I was there, two steps away from him. I replied, "At your order, my captain."

"Take this garbage out and burn it right away. Next time I see your advertisements here, I will send you to jail."

"Yes, my captain. At your service."

He could have put me in jail, like he said. He had the hard evidence of the crime right there. But he didn't. Why? I don't know; my brothers' prayers, maybe. I took all the fliers and I asked my friend the corporal to keep them for me.

"Don't put me in jeopardy, Monroy," he mumbled. But he did what I asked him to do, and nothing happened.

Another incident involved Lieutenant Soler. Soler was a different story. He was tall and slender and wore prescription glasses. He was from Tenerife, from the city of Garachico, a tolerant, educated man. I could sense that every time we ran into each other, he would look at me as if he intended to kill me. In one of those encounters, he whispered to me: "You are gambling, Monroy. I will put you in jail for three years."

I wasn't aware of the reasons for his enmity and his threats. But I found out. There was an Angel Soler among the believers who met in Santa Cruz, where I preached each free Sunday I had. During one of those casual conversations after the service, I just happened to mention the threat I had received from Lieutenant Soler. Angel joined in the conversation:

"He's my brother."

"Your brother?"

"Yes."

"Does he know you are a Protestant?"

"No, but I send some of our fliers to his house. I once sent him a New Testament; but always without a return address."

Everything was clear now. His own brother would send him evangelical literature. How could he think that I had found out his home address? Maybe

he was more intrigued by this than by the literature itself. The next day, I approached Lieutenant Soler and I told him everything. He could not believe his ears.

“My brother Angel is Protestant?”

“Yes, Lieutenant. He was converted and baptized and is now a member of the church. I see him frequently.”

“All right. Leave now. I will speak with Angel.”

From that day on, Lieutenant Soler's attitude toward me changed. He was kind. One afternoon, while on duty, I was passing through the flag room when he asked me to sit down and tell him about the Europeans in Tangier. He was curious to know how it was possible for so many different nationalities and religions to coexist in that international city. We became friends.

13

THE CHURCH IN TENERIFE

In Chapter 8, I wrote about the Canary archipelago, which consists of seven islands, the most important of which is Tenerife. Santa Cruz is the capital. When I was taken there to serve voluntarily in the Spanish army, Santa Cruz had a population of about 200,000. The city has grown from the ocean toward the mountains. The port is currently one of the most important in Spain.

Around 1930, two couples from England arrived in Santa Cruz. They were missionaries for a denomination called Plymouth Brethren. It's a very well-known group in Europe and Latin America, especially in Argentina. This movement started in the English city of Plymouth in the eighteenth century, thus the name. Among the evangelical groups, the Plymouth Brethren is the most similar to the church of Christ. They have elders and they take the Lord's Supper every Sunday. Their women don't preach or pray in the church. In Spain, they don't use instrumental music in their services.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, a ruthless persecution started against evangelicals, and the two couples moved back to England. In six years, they had converted around fifty people who were now left orphans without the missionaries' leadership.

Another missionary arrived in Tenerife in 1947. His name was Emiliano Acosta. He was born on the island, in a town called La Orotava. When he was a child, his parents migrated to Cuba. Acosta was converted to Christ there. He studied for six years at a biblical institute. Once he graduated, he decided to move to Tenerife to preach the gospel to his people and the many relatives he had there. Emiliano was single, short, a bit heavy, almost bald. I have never met another man as committed as him. He prayed on his knees several times a day. He constantly read the Bible. He was humble, kind with everyone, a laid back preacher, calm but very profound when he explained God's word. Emiliano had all the traits that Paul mentions in Colossians 3:12. He was a man clothed in humility and gentleness. As poet and philosopher Ralph W. Emerson once said, the strength and greatness of a person are found in humility.

I learned a lot from Emiliano Acosta.

When he arrived in Tenerife, he set out to gather the converts who were scattered, and he started services on Sundays and Thursdays. He also traveled regularly to La Orotava, about thirty miles southwest of Santa Cruz. It was easy for him to start another congregation there among his parents' many relatives.

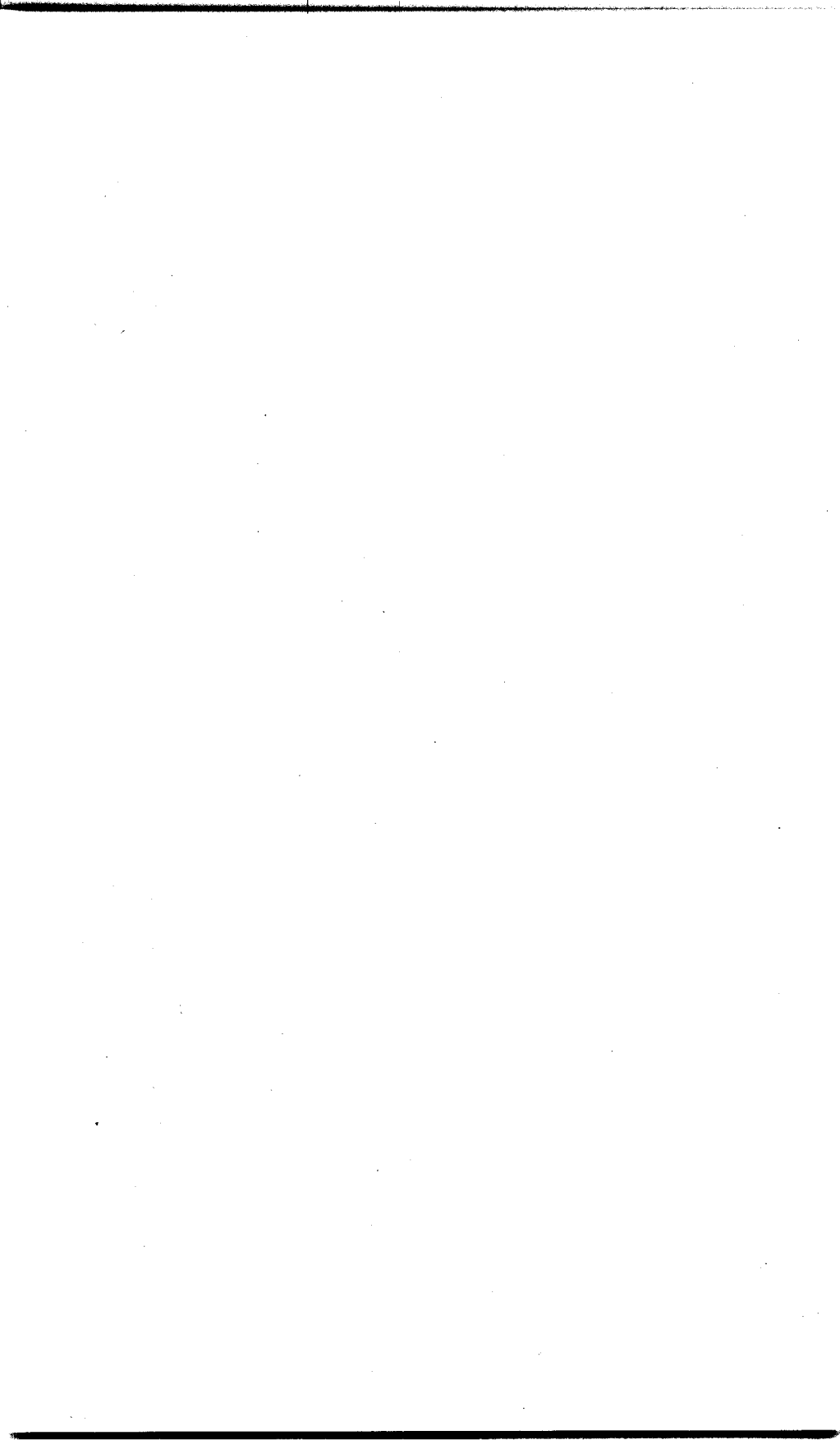
As I have explained before, Catholic bishops and priests had more power than government authorities during those times. The Catholic Church enjoyed all privileges. We were "Luther's Protestants, heretics who were not to be allowed anything."

When I arrived in the church in Santa Cruz, it already had about seventy members. We couldn't build, buy, or rent a building for our services, even if we had the money. We were only allowed to meet in homes in groups of no more than twenty. Emiliano coordinated the work; he would assign from one Sunday to the next who was to meet where. If there were any visitors, the members had to stay out. Having more than twenty people in a house could mean being punished with high fines or sent to jail.

This very negative situation for the church turned out to be positive for me. Let me explain. There were very few men who could preach. Emiliano would go to two houses each Sunday. Other elders would take turns preaching. But there was still a lack of preachers. The elders decided that I would

preach each Sunday at a house. Fortunately, we could leave the barracks freely on Sundays. I joyfully accepted the elders' decision. But I didn't only preach in houses. Since my Sundays were mostly free, I organized the children's Sunday school and started a youth group. I devoted myself completely to the work of the church during the free times the army allowed me to have. On Thursdays and Sundays, there were services in La Orotava as well. Sometimes Emiliano himself would attend, sometimes one of the elders. I occasionally preached in La Orotava on Sundays and Thursdays when I got permission to leave the barracks.

That was my first training as a preacher. That's where I learned the importance of work. Many young people only care about having a good time. They think their youth will last forever. Others take advantage of each day and each hour to devote to their work. I was one of those. German politician Otto Bismarck once said that he had three pieces of advice for the young: work, work, and work. I agree. I did and still do practice his advice.



THEY WANT TO KILL US

As I have already mentioned, La Orotava is a town about thirty miles south of Santa Cruz, the capital of Tenerife. Nowadays, it must have a population of around 50,000. La Orotava is an extremely beautiful green valley. The plains are surrounded by mountains; some of which are of volcanic origins. Abundant vegetation grows in the hills. Northern and northeastern winds bring frequent rain showers between the months of November and April. When German naturalist Alexander Humboldt visited La Orotava in 1799, he said it was the most beautiful scenery in the world.

La Orotava produces tons of bananas that are exported to Europe and the Americas, including the United States. The entire valley is full of banana trees with leaves measuring six to nine feet long. In some regions, the leaves from the banana tree are used as food for cattle.

When we arrive in La Orotava on the highway from Santa Cruz, our eyes witness a giant sea of green banana trees covering the whole valley. The local poor have built houses near the mountains, where land is free—or at least it used to be when I was there.

The houses where the church met were in an elevated area, a neighborhood called Florida Alta. An older lady with her daughter lived in one of the

houses. The daughter, who was about thirty five, had to have a leg amputated. Her name was Anita; she was tall and rather large and moved with difficulty. She would spend her days sitting in front of a sewing machine that she worked with one leg. Her job sewing for other people would allow her to make some money. We called her mother Aunt Inocencia because she was our preacher Emiliano Acosta's aunt. She was very short and thin, she didn't know how to read or write, but her small body was full of love and kindness.

There were very few roads then; very few people owned cars. I'm talking about the years 1951 and 1952. The bus that brought passengers from the capital would leave them in the main square in town. Anyone who wished to go to Florida Alta had to do it walking on open roads through banana fields. Since it was an uphill walk, it would take about an hour to get there. Emiliano and I would walk these roads when we went to Aunt Inocencia's house, where we had church service, and stayed overnight in a very simple, rustic room with only two small beds. Emiliano snored quite loudly.

One Wednesday, we arrived in La Orotava around 10 p.m. We got off the bus and set out to Florida Alta walking on those roads among banana plants. All of a sudden, in the darkness of the night, a man appeared and blocked off the road. With his right hand he was waving a machete, a single-edged weapon a tad shorter than a sword, wide and heavy, used by country people to prune banana trees. He approached me, and with a crazy look in his eyes he asked, "Are you the preacher of the Protestant church?" I confess I was afraid. I pointed at Emiliano and replied, "No, I'm not; this gentleman here is the preacher."

"Well, I've come to kill you. And I will kill you, too."

As I have already mentioned, Emiliano Acosta was a very calm, composed man. I never saw him in a situation in which he lost his temper. His self-control was enviable. Very calmly, he approached the alleged murderer and asked, "Why do you want to kill us?"

"Because you don't believe in the Virgin Mary."

"Who has told you that?"

"The priest in Florida Alta. He said this morning in Mass that Protestants don't believe in the Virgin Mary, that they are heretics, and we should kick them all out of La Orotava."

"Did the priest tell you to kill us?" Emiliano asked.

"No, I decided to do that myself. Because I am a member of the Virgin's Brotherhood and you are insulting her."

I can't tell whether the next thing I witnessed was a miracle, an angel speaking through Emiliano's mouth, or my partner's faith, strength, and trust in God. He got his Bible out of the bag he carried in his hand, read a few passages from the New Testament and preached to that man about the Virgin Mary. Among other things, I remember he said, "If Jesus Christ is our Savior, how can we not believe in his mother? How can we not believe in the mother of the one who was nailed to a cross and gave his life for us?"

The man gave up. He put his machete away and said, "I will speak with the priest tomorrow." Emiliano asked him, "Where do you live?"

"I live in Florida Alta," answered the one who had come to kill us.

"We are going there as well. We can keep talking on our way," Emiliano said.

In reality, he was the one doing all the talking. I participated just a little from time to time. Our companion was listening to things he had never heard before. He asked questions that revealed his interest in the topics that Acosta talked to him about.

When we arrived at our destination, the machete man did two things: he hugged Emiliano and gave him his home address so he could go visit him. He shook my hand. He didn't dare hug a twenty-two-year-old man whom he didn't know well.

Would it seem impossible for an alleged criminal to transform into a sheep after a one-hour conversation? I am referring to Paul the apostle, the young Jewish Pharisee who was on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus to kill as many Christians as possible. If Paul's destiny was changed by one single phrase pronounced by the resurrected Christ from heaven, why can't a one-hour conversation about the same Christ change another Catholic Pharisee with the same criminal intentions? Each religious phenomenon has its own

story. This man had an identity that was imposed on him at the time of his birth: Esteban Martín, Catholic. Now he was finding a new way to believe in God through the words of the gospel, a living, personal, and intimate way between him and God.

Esteban Martín studied the Bible with Emiliano Acosta and with me. Emiliano baptized him for the remission of his sins six months later. The story didn't end there. In June of 1956, I published the testimony of his conversion in a magazine that I used to edit in Tangier titled *Luz y verdad (Light and Truth)*. The text was illustrated with a photo of Esteban Martín. In the photo, Esteban showed in his right hand the machete he had intended to use to kill Emiliano and me. The testimony included a nice family anecdote. He explained, "I didn't miss a single service, and my life changed completely. But my relationship with my wife, which was already shaky before my conversion, grew even worse after I was converted, even to the extreme of not talking to each other for fifteen days. If I needed something, I would write it on a piece of paper and she would do the same with me. My wife's passion was going to the movie theater. I refused to go with her. I wished so much for her to come to a church service with me that I said, 'If you come with me to the service once, I will take you to the movie theater every day for a week.' She agreed and came with me for the first time on a Wednesday. We had another worship service the next day. I asked her to get ready to go to the movies, but she chose to go to the service instead. We didn't go out again until the service on Sunday. The Lord also touched my wife's heart from the beginning. We both now live in the peace and joy of the Lord."

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace in the hearts of men!

15

A TWENTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD PREACHER FOR TWO CONGREGATIONS

In the inspired text of the seventh chapter of Job, he says that days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle (v. 6). Spanish poet Federico García Lorca wished to bind time with chords made of black nights.

Impossible. Nobody can bind time. The waves that once came on the shore are never coming back, as Argentine tango singer Carlos Gardel used to sing. Everything begins. Everything comes. Everything comes to an end. God has appointed time to control the life of human beings. The duration of our lives is one year that is replaced by the following year. One of the many gifts we receive from time is the possibility of looking back and remembering the different stages of our lives.

That is what I am doing right now. I am placing myself in the past to be able to tell about it in the present.

My commitment to the Spanish army ended in the fall of 1952. I decided to go back to Tangier, where my parents lived. Back in 1814, Napoleon wrote: "Soldiers of my former guard, to you I say farewell!" I don't like farewells, and never have. You need tissues to wipe away tears.

My farewell to the Christians in Tenerife lasted a week or more. I had to say goodbye to the youth group, the children, the church in La Orotava, and the church in Santa Cruz. The boat from Tenerife to Cádiz, in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, set sail around 3 p.m. About a hundred people gathered at the port. I was sent off with many hugs, kisses, and words of encouragement like “God bless you,” “keep working for the Lord,” “come back sometime,” among others.

Neither they nor I knew that I would soon be back with them in that port. Our lives are subject to a higher Will, the will of God. He has surprises in store for us that we had never considered.

Indeed, I had been in Tangier only five months when I received an envelope in the mail with two letters inside. One was from Emiliano Acosta. In his letter he said that he missed his family in Cuba very much and that the mission that took him to Tenerife had come to an end. He was planning to return immediately to the Caribbean. I knew those were not the only reasons. As I have said before, Emiliano was single. He had not met anyone in Tenerife who could become his wife. He was very lonely; it would be easier for him to find a partner and get married in Cuba.

And that is what happened.

In his letter, Emiliano asked me to go back to Tenerife to take over his work with the churches. The other letter was signed by three elders of the congregation. They said practically the same thing. They had talked with the brethren in Santa Cruz and La Orotava and decided that I was the right man to carry on the ministry of preaching in both congregations.

The day I received those two letters, I could not eat or sleep. I was confused. Was this of God, or of Emiliano and the elders, who were not able to find another preacher?

I prayed about it. I spoke with the preacher of my congregation, who didn't quite help. He simply said to do whatever I thought was the will of God.

In their letter, the elders in Tenerife said they could pay me very little; each congregation would pay only 150 *pesetas* a month. Three hundred *pesetas* back then were about five American dollars. How could a man—even a single man—live on five dollars a month? They were also committing to help some with food.

Money didn't worry me. I have always left this area of my life in God's hands. He has been my manager.

They wanted me to start immediately, in January of 1953. Emiliano was planning to leave in February. Back then, I was twenty three and a half years old—too young for that kind of responsibility. But I could see a more serious problem than that. I had been converted to the Lord Jesus Christ in October of 1950. I had been in the church for a little over two years. A twenty-three-year-old young man who was raised in a Christian home, attended Sunday school since he was a child, read the Bible constantly, and heard sermons each Sunday is fit to preach the Word of God. Or he should be.

My case was different. My mother was Catholic but she didn't practice her religion. There was only Marxist literature in my house. I grew up in the midst of atheism. I did not know the Bible. The first time I had the Word of God in my hands was in October of 1950. I didn't have enough biblical education. How would I be able to devote myself to preaching full time in two congregations? The year and a half I spent helping the churches while I was in the military service was a different thing. I only preached once in a while. I would take four ideas from the Gospels—which is the part of the Bible I enjoy the most—and I would come up with a sermon that left my audience satisfied.

What was being proposed to me was different. I had to preach Sunday mornings and Thursdays in Santa Cruz, and Sunday afternoons and Wednesdays in La Orotava. That was four sermons a week, plus some Bible studies, taking care of problems, meeting with youth groups, and visiting sick members. It was too much for me.

God was pushing me; he wanted me to learn by teaching. I obeyed. I decided to do it. I took a bus from Tangier to Casablanca. At the port in Morocco, I took a boat straight to Tenerife.

In January of 1953, I found myself again on the Canary Island. Emiliano spent one month training me to do his work; we traveled to small towns around the island where there were converts. On February 14, Valentine's Day—a day to express love, as they say—Emiliano Acosta returned to Cuba and left me all by myself in the face of adventure.

Since I had little money, the elders decided that I would live in La Orotava from Sunday afternoon until Thursday afternoon. On Sunday morning and Wednesday night, I had to preach in Santa Cruz.

In La Orotava, I stayed with Aunt Inocencia. My bedroom was a brick room, no paint, no bathroom. I had to go out into the fields for my physiological needs. Aunt Inocencia was very fond of me. She fed me whatever she had at hand: a lot of potatoes and dry fish with ground cornmeal, which is called *gofio* over there. Every morning before I got up, she would bring me a cup of coffee. Very often there would be a few of Aunt Inocencia's hairs floating in the coffee. I never saw her comb her hair. On Thursdays, I stayed in the house of another lady in Santa Cruz who was a member of the church. Her name was Doña Guadalupe. She was a rather large woman, around sixty or seventy years old, and a widow. The situation was different there. The room was nice and the bed was comfortable. I had a bathroom, so I could shower every day. I knew I couldn't shower from Sunday until Thursday of the next week in La Orotava.

I must say that, although I was paid 300 *pesetas* a month—around five dollars back then—I never went hungry. The brethren provided. On two occasions, I was given fabric for suits. Miguel Barrios was a tailor in the congregation in Santa Cruz and he would make my suits for free.

Regarding the ministry, the Lord helped me. Fortunately for me, I had always been an avid reader. Even today, I can still recite by memory two books I read when I was nine years old.

One of the elders, Don Manuel, had a good collection of evangelical books in his home library. I was interested in Bible commentaries and books of sermons. I was obsessed with presenting good lessons on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays that would lead to the building up of the congregations. God did the rest.

Those times for me were like going to school. I learned a lot about the Bible when I had to study it to teach it to others. If the Holy Scriptures could make Timothy wise, why wouldn't they impart a little of that divine wisdom to me as well?

BURNED IN EFFIGY

In Florida Alta, where I lived with Aunt Inocencia, there was a Catholic temple. The priest there was around fifty years old and a fierce anti-Protestant. It was because of his influence that one of his parishioners, Estaban Martín, almost killed me and Emiliano in the incident I told about in Chapter 14. Every Sunday, he would preach against the “heretics” who gathered to have forbidden meetings near his temple.

I had become friends with a young woman who lived near Aunt Inocencia. Her name was Mari Sol and she was two years younger than me. She was the daughter of the only school teacher in Florida Alta. She enjoyed literature, which was also my favorite topic of conversation. We didn’t see each other frequently, but when we did, we talked about books.

Mari Sol was Catholic. She attended Mass every Sunday at the temple near her house. Everything was close by in that neighborhood, and we all knew one another.

One day, Mari Sol told me that the priest was furious with me. One Sunday, his sermon was almost entirely dedicated to me. He announced to his parishioners that Monroy was even more dangerous than Emiliano. “He’s more educated,” he said, “he speaks foreign languages and he comes from the most evil city in Morocco. Don’t be deceived. Watch out, don’t go to his gatherings.”

One afternoon on another occasion, I noticed that Mari Sol wanted to speak with me. She was in the balcony of her house. I had just finished writing an article and left my room when I saw her signaling me to meet with her.

"Is something wrong?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied. "The priest said on Sunday that we have to burn you."

I was alarmed. "What do you mean 'burn' me?"

"Well, I mean burn you in effigy. He will do it next Saturday in front of our temple. He has asked people to bring wood. You should leave town and go to Santa Cruz."

She didn't say anything else. She didn't want to be with me long. She was afraid of her father because he didn't know we were friends.

I wasn't in Florida Alta that Saturday, but not because I was afraid of being burned; after all, it was just an effigy. I was in Santa Cruz because I had a meeting with the youth group there.

It's possible that the American reader might not know exactly what it means to be "burned in effigy."

It was one of the punishments imposed by the Inquisition.

For those of you who are not familiar with this, let me explain briefly. The Inquisition was like a Supreme Court, independent from the civil court. It was established by the Vatican in the twelfth century to judge everyone whom they considered heretics: priests and bishops who deserted the Catholic doctrine as well as Muslims and Jews who lived in Catholic countries. After the sixteenth century, Protestants—the ultimate heretics—had to endure severe punishments.

In a monumental work on the history of Christianity, historian François Laurent says that the Inquisition was the greatest crime of the Catholic Church. He added that the word inquisition says more than all the human languages together could ever say.

Spain was like a paradise for the Inquisition. It was established there in the middle of the fifteenth century and exerted its power until 1843, when it was prohibited for good by Queen María Cristina, who was King Fernando VII's widow. Laurent commented that the Inquisition killed the soul of Spain.

Another prestigious historian is Juan Antonio Llorente, a Catholic who affirmed that in the five centuries that the Inquisition terrorized Spaniards, it produced 341,021 victims. Of these, 31,912 were burned at the stake. Another 291,450 were tortured and punished with severe penalties. And 17,659 were burned in effigy. The greatest and most noble spirit of the Spanish people was consumed in the bodies of those 31,912 who were burned alive.

Those who were burned in effigy were people whom the Inquisition considered guilty of heresy but couldn't locate because they lived in countries over which the Inquisition had no jurisdiction. In place of the person, they would burn a life-sized, look-alike figure with a sign on its chest.

That's how I was burned in La Orotava. The priest had a Monroy look-alike figure made, and put a sign around the neck that read, "Monroy, heretic," and he set it on fire while people laughed and clapped.

When I arrived in La Orotava the next day for the evening service, the brethren were waiting to tell me the news. They were not worried. They said that very few Catholics had attended the burning of the fake Monroy. The children in the congregation were laughing and singing: "Monroy, the priest has burned you!"

No, the priest didn't burn me. Many years have gone by since then, and I'm still here. My flesh is not on fire. It is written: "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze" (Isaiah 43:2).

After that incident, the Catholic priest didn't worry about me any more. It was as if I had died. At times, when I walked those roads, some children from Catholic families would yell at me, "Monroy, go back to your country, go and convert Moors!" Things children say, that's all.

Mari Sol's father found out that she and I spoke occasionally, so he took her away from there. I later learned that he had sent her to live with relatives on another of the islands, Las Palmas. I never saw her again.

I remained committed to my ministry. I tried to replace my biblical ignorance with a strong will to learn. He who has the will, has the strength. If Christ said that faith can move mountains, he who is willing is capable of attaining everything that would be impossible for someone with no will.



BIBLE SCHOOL

I stayed on the Island of Tenerife until October of 1954. There were two reasons that led me to end my work in Santa Cruz and La Orotava. Agustín Santaña, a young man who was a member of another congregation in the neighboring island of Las Palmas, had returned to the Canaries after having attended the *Instituto Bíblico* in Costa Rica for three years. I spoke with him, for I wanted to know if he could take my place in Santa Cruz and La Orotava. He said he would. So I expressed to the elders my desire to return to Morocco. I mentioned the possibility of Agustín Santana replacing me, and they agreed to it.

The second reason for leaving my work in Tenerife was more powerful. For over a year and a half, I had been preaching and teaching, although I didn't have any formal biblical training. Everybody was happy with my work—everybody except me. I was aware of the fact that I lacked biblical knowledge. I also needed to be more prepared to do my Christian ministry more efficiently. I wanted to study at a Bible school, but where? I was somehow known in Spain by then. Evangelical leaders suggested that I study in England, in the United States, in Switzerland, or in France. The latter two appealed more to me because I had come from a French culture. I spoke French as fluently as I spoke

Spanish. But they were all Bible institutes or schools that belonged to evangelical denominations. I was looking for something different; I was looking for a school without any denominational commitments.

I was dealing with this decision when I received information about a Bible school in my country, Morocco. It was in the south, in the city of Kemisset, close to Rabat, which was the city where I had been born. I wrote and requested information. I got an answer from the secretary, Mr. Peabody, who said that they could not admit a Spaniard because theirs was a school for converted Muslims, and all classes were taught in Arabic. That wasn't an obstacle for me. I wrote back saying that I was a European Christian, but had been born in Morocco; therefore, I knew how to speak, write, and read in Arabic. The man was happy. In his second letter, he said I was admitted and should plan a visit to see the school and make a final decision.

How hard it was for me to say goodbye to the brethren in Tenerife again! I had learned to love those people with all my heart. My feelings were more heavenly than earthly. Those human, brotherly, and spiritual bonds still remain alive inside of me.

How happy was that time I stayed in Tenerife, especially with the modest brethren of La Orotava, for that's where I experimented with what it means to preach the gospel in a country with religious intolerance and persecution. We had to watch our backs quite a bit in order not to be reported to the police for meeting illegally. In Florida Alta, when we gathered to have Bible studies in far away houses, we had to walk at night on manure-covered roads. We would walk on those narrow roads in single lines, with torches that we would make ourselves to light the way. We didn't have umbrellas; when it rained, we would get soaked. We would protect our Bibles under our clothes against the body. Rain never stopped us from attending a meeting. We didn't know the meaning of the word *tired*. Faith and joy were our constant incentives.

In October of 1954, I left Tenerife. The farewell was very difficult, as I have said. The day I left La Orotava, around 10 in the morning, I looked for Aunt Inocencia to say goodbye. She wasn't at home. Her daughter Anita told me

that, very early that morning, she had gone to the hills. She couldn't bear the thought of seeing me leave the house.

I arrived in Tangier, and from there I traveled to Kemisset to visit the Bible school. It was small, with only about fifteen students, all of whom were Arabian. I liked it. They welcomed me very warmly. I was the only European there, and the teachers were all from the United States. They had learned how to speak Arabic. They had translated the Bible and a songbook. The whole course took three years to complete. I was going to begin in March of the following year, 1955. According to my calculations, I would graduate when I was twenty-six years old.

By then, I already had a girlfriend. She was a young woman from the church in Tangier; her name was Mercedes Herrero. I will speak about her in the next chapter.

In March of 1955, I began my studies in the Biblical School of Kemisset. The students were distributed in pairs, two in each bedroom. I was placed in a bedroom by myself, which was good because I would stay up until one or two in the morning reviewing the lessons and studying the Bible. Among the professors, the one who influenced me the most during the time I attended the school was a woman. She was a single woman from Kansas, about sixty years old, whom we called Mrs. Johnson. She would pray every hour, and she cried frequently. She was completely committed to the Lord and his work.

As days went by, I wasn't satisfied with what they were teaching me. Four months into my stay in that school, I requested a meeting with the director, Mr. Schneider. He was from Kansas as well. He welcomed me in his office one afternoon and asked me what my concerns were. I said I wanted to leave the school. He turned white and looked nervous and highly surprised. On his desk, I could see fliers with my picture on them. He had sent these fliers that spoke about me to donors in the United States.

"Why do you want to leave the school?" he asked. "You have signed up for the whole duration of the course."

"I know, but I don't think you are teaching everything the Bible says," I replied.

“You have been here only four months, and you expect to know the whole Bible already?” he asked.

“No, Mr. Schneider, I don’t expect to know the whole Bible. But I read it a lot in my room. And I don’t agree with the musical instruments that you use in the service on Sundays. I also don’t approve of women preaching on Sundays, of your form of baptism, and of celebrating the Lord’s Supper only once a month.”

Mr. Schneider was even more surprised. He said: “Those things are not important.”

“They are not important to you,” I replied, “but they are to me. I left Marxism to commit to Christ, and I want to practice Christianity as it is taught in the New Testament.”

He tried to convince me again with new arguments. But my decision was already made. I left the Bible School of Kemisset one week later and returned to Tangier.

Isaiah says, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn” (Isaiah 8:20).

The director and the professors of that school were good people, but they did not teach the laws and the testimony of God correctly because they were still living in some doctrinal errors. The “whole counsel of God” had yet to dawn on them (Acts 20:27).

THE CHURCH IN TANGIER

When I left the Biblical School of Kemisset, I returned to Tangier. By then, the church where I had been converted had about ninety members. And it had a lot of problems as well.

One of the problems was the preacher's family. I mentioned in Chapter 4 that Rubén Lores was from Cuba and had married a young woman from the Christian Church in Minneapolis. The couple didn't get along well; they didn't understand each other, so they argued quite a bit.

She had met Rubén when they were both students at the Moody Institute in Chicago, where they fell in love. After graduating, she took him to Minneapolis to introduce him to her parents. They got married and a few months later left the United States and settled as missionaries in Morocco, North Africa, in the city of Tangier.

I soon figured out that their marital problems had their origin in that sudden, mismatched marriage, and their trip to Africa.

Dana was a young woman who had been raised in a very close Christian family. She was very fragile physically. She was romantic, sensitive, and tender-hearted. He was Latin American, a Cuban *macho*, with little respect for women, even though he was a preacher.

In a short time, Dana found herself living in an Arab country and Muslim culture, thousands of miles away from her green Minneapolis, living with a man who understood her very little and supported her even less. One day, after their frequent fights, Rubén called me to his office and said, "Juan Antonio, I should never have married an American woman."

They divorced a few years later, and he remarried. The second time around, he married a Latin American woman from Costa Rica.

The problems in the home of the preacher had affected the church. There was quite a bit of discontent; too many divisions and very little work.

In September of 1955, Rubén Lores invited me to eat with him at a restaurant. He wanted to speak with me. While we ate, he explained the problem to me. He didn't talk about his marriage; instead, he talked about the church. He said he was sick and tired of the congregation and wanted to go back to the United States. The American Bible Society had offered him a job in their New York branch and he had decided to take it. He was asking me to take over as a preacher.

I wasn't surprised by the fact that he wanted to leave. He was tired of the church, and the church was tired of him. What did surprise me was his proposal for me to take over. It seems as if God kept using me to take over the work of others. It had happened with Emiliano first, and now it was happening with Rubén.

With my hands on the Bible, I say that in my long life I have never sought after positions, titles, or special honors. But I have never said no to the work God put in front of me, either.

I met with Rubén Lores a few more times. I asked him how many men there were in the eldership. He said there were six, each of a different nationality, and everyone supported me as the next preacher of the congregation. He had already talked to them about it.

I spoke with some of the most faithful Spanish brethren; they encouraged me and prayed for me. After putting it all in the hands of the Lord, I had another meeting with Lores. I told him I accepted.

I was officially named preacher of the church in Tangier on December 5, 1955. A few days later, Rubén Lores left for New York with his wife and two young daughters.

I stepped up to the pulpit to preach my first sermon without having met with the elders. I doubt that a preacher in the United States would be allowed to do that. But the situation in that congregation was not normal.

I started working.

The first thing I had to do was to find out what the current state of the congregation was.

It was in ruins.

The members were divided in three groups. One group consisted of foreigners and the other two consisted of Spaniards. Everybody was against everybody. I was able to confirm that the problems were due to the malfunctioning of the eldership. There were two Cubans, an American, a Russian, a British, and a Spaniard; this eldership was Babel, nothing too strange if you keep in mind that seventeen different nationalities coexisted in the international city of Tangier.

I maintained a good relationship with only one of the elders: the American. He was a good older man. His name was Peter Harayda. He and his wife, Sarah, were from New York and didn't have any children. Ever since I gave my life to Christ, Harayda taught me the importance and value of prayer. We all called him Don Pedro in the church. One day, I told him what was in my heart.

"Don Pedro, I'm going to dissolve the eldership."

Harayda looked at me not believing what he had just heard.

"Juan, have you gone crazy? You can't do that. They are above you."

"God is the only one who is above me," I replied and then added, "Don Pedro, all the problems in this church are due to the malfunctioning of the council. I want a healthy, united church. Tell the rest of the elders that, beginning today, I am not counting on them."

Harayda spoke with the rest of the elders and brought a reply back to me.

"Juan, they said you have to leave the church. They do not accept you as a preacher."

"No way," I replied. "God has put me here, and this is where I'll stay."

I knew I could count on the support of the majority of the congregation. One Sunday, I stepped up to the pulpit and communicated the news. The eldership had been dissolved and didn't exist anymore.

The two Cubans left without complaining. The Russian elder said he was also sick and tired of the Spaniards. Harayda continued supporting me, although he stepped down as an elder. The British elder, whose last name was Scot, was the one who opposed me the most. I named the Spaniard secretary of the church. We also elected a treasurer. The church stepped into a new stage with only three positions: a preacher, a secretary, and a treasurer.

In the next two years the church changed; all divisions were overcome, and we gave ourselves to the work of evangelism. Our membership grew to two hundred, and then we chose a new council made up of four elders along with four deacons, all of whom were Spaniards. I did not want to be one of the elders.

I know that what I just told in this chapter would have been impossible to do in a church in the United States. All through my years of ministry, I have never had to face another situation like that again. Those were very special circumstances. It needed to be done, and I did it.

Where did I get the strength and courage to face those problems? I got it from the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament. They were brave, determined men. They trusted the divine protection to denounce everything that was wrong in the nation of Israel, in society, and in the kings of their times. I was certain that God would be with me as he was with them. And he was.

19

I GET MARRIED

I got married on January 26, 1956. Her name was Mercedes Herrero and she was baptized in Tangier two months before I was. When we got married, I was three years older than her. And since we're both still alive, I continue to be three years older.

Mercedes' parents were from Spain. They migrated to Morocco when they were very young. The family prospered there. Her father had two fishing boats. Mercedes was educated in French schools since she was a young child. Although she never attended Spanish schools, she could read and write in Spanish without any problem.

Her mother was very conservative, and Mercedes inherited her mother's ideas and feelings.

Throughout the years, I have preached in evangelistic campaigns and conferences and done Bible studies in twenty-nine of the fifty states in the United States. Nobody has ever met my wife. This is the first time I've ever spoken about her. I have to do it. An autobiography is the story of a person's life written by himself or herself. I can't write the story of my life without talking about my wife and my family.

Some elders and preachers who have been in my home in Spain have met my wife. But she has never traveled with me to the United States or anywhere

else. Some people even thought I was a widower. I worked with the Highland Church in Abilene as a missionary to Spain for forty-two years. I was honored by them on two different occasions. The elders wanted my wife to attend too. They were willing to pay for her plane ticket and hotel stay in Abilene, but she never wanted to go.

I was once invited to preach in a campaign at a church in Miami, where Tom Isaac preached. I met Tom at the World Fair in New York. There was a man in that church who—word had it—was a millionaire. His name was Bob, but I can't recall his last name. He was one of the elders. Bob asked me to bring my wife to Miami; he would pay for her hotel stay and a first-class airplane ticket. When I went back to Spain, I told this to Mercedes. She said no, she didn't travel with me on church-related trips.

Let me explain why she has this attitude.

Two days after the wedding ceremony, which took place in our congregation, we went on one of those trips known as a *honeymoon*. I naturally chose the island of Tenerife as our destination, and she agreed. It's always summer in Tenerife. Temperatures range between 71 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. We had some money, and Mercedes dreamed of spending a few days in a hotel by the sea, just the two of us.

Well, it didn't quite happen that way. We stayed in the house of some friends of mine in Florida Alta, La Orotava. I started preaching immediately. I preached fourteen times during the ten days of our honeymoon. I traveled to Santa Cruz and other towns constantly. She would stay alone with my friends. We saw each other at night when I got back. I would find her very angry, and I didn't blame her. I admit I acted very irresponsibly. When we got back to Tangier, she said to me, "I will never again go with you on church-related trips."

And she never did.

She didn't really support my work at all, either. She would limit her outings with me to church on Sundays, and that was it. She didn't help with children's Sunday school, or women's classes, or anything else. She would say to me: "You are the preacher. I'm your wife, but not a preacher's wife."

And she was right; she was very right. I couldn't ask of her what God hadn't granted her. I have met many preachers whose wives are not interested at all in the work their husbands do. It's not their fault. Their husbands were called by the Lord to serve him. The wives weren't.

I will explain this with a biblical example. Chapter 9 of the book of Acts tells us how Paul's conversion took place. The account of his conversion in chapter 22 is made in front of a crowd in Jerusalem explaining what happened on the way to Jerusalem from Damascus when he was traveling with other young Pharisees. It says that those who were with him "saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me" (Acts 22:9).

What language did Jesus speak from heaven? Whether it was Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, those educated Pharisees knew those languages, just as Paul did. Why didn't they understand Jesus' words? Simply because the message was only for Paul. Jesus was interested in Paul alone, not in any of the others. Paul was the one who would become the greatest missionary of all time.

When a young minister of the gospel hears God's voice in his heart to serve him and gets married before starting to serve, he needs to make sure that the woman he has chosen has heard the same calling from God. Otherwise, he will always have problems.

In my case, God called me to serve him from the very moment of my conversion. But he didn't call her. And this difference affected our relationship.

Mercedes never supported my ministry. But she has always been a good woman, a very good woman. She never caused any problems. She was always very introverted, not very demonstrative with the members of the congregation, but I never heard a single complaint about her. She was very much loved and respected in the church. She has always been a good woman, wife, and mother.

We had four daughters: Yolanda, Loida, Mónica, and Zoraida. I would teach the Bible to thousands of people; Mercedes had a congregation of four. She educated her daughters in very strict moral principles as well as biblical principles. Everything my daughters learned about Christ, they learned from their mother. I was constantly traveling. Whenever I stayed in Madrid, I would

spend most of my time writing, locked up in my office. When the girls had a problem, they would go to her, not to me.

We now have ten grandchildren. Mercedes' congregation has grown from four to fourteen people. She continues to be a mother and a teacher for her grandchildren, just as she was for our daughters. There was no partying for her, no outings to movie theaters or any other kind of entertainment, no makeup or expensive clothes; her home and her daughters were her world.

Abraham Lincoln once said that no child is poor if he had a mother who taught him the way of the Lord. In that sense, my daughters are rich because they have had that kind of mother.



The Monroy family. Left to right:
Loida, Monica, Juan Antonio, Zoraida, Mercedes, and Yolanda.

20

FOUR INTENSE YEARS

The four years between 1956 and 1960 were very intense for my ministry. I had evangelism fever. I wanted to convert Spain and all the Spaniards living in Morocco. Like Jeremiah, my heart was burning up with a fire that consumed me when I saw the spiritual status of the Spanish people immersed in Catholic idolatry.

I would like to explain something very important that I have not yet explained. I was born to a French father and a Spanish mother in a country that was neither French nor Spanish. I was registered in the Civil Registry before Moroccan authorities. When I turned twenty, I had to choose my citizenship, either Spanish or French. I was very much attracted to the Spanish citizenship, so I decided to become Spanish. After the independence of Morocco, my parents moved to France, and they passed away there. They are buried in Autun, a French town in the Saone-et-Loire district, by the Arroux River. After having chosen my citizenship, I decided to voluntarily join the Spanish army, as I have already told in Chapter 6.

All of this explains why my heart was with the Spanish people, both those who lived in Morocco and those who lived in Spain. I wanted to win them all for Christ. Woe unto me! Not even Christ or Paul could win their people

over. But it was my dream. When you stop dreaming, you stop living and are reduced to life as a vegetable.

Back to those four years between 1956 and 1960.

I didn't have any financial problems. I owned a commercial printing press called *Imprenta Sueco-Americana* (*Swedish-American Press*). I bought it from a Swede who said he had gotten very tired of Moors after a few years in Tangier, so he went back to Stockholm. I bought it at a very good price. It was located in a residential area of Tangier, on Viñas Street. My wife had a good salary as a secretary in the State Bank of Morocco.

I constantly preached evangelistic messages. One of my favorite passages was Isaiah 54:2-3: "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left."

I would explain that curtains—found generally inside houses—represented the internal growth of the church, growth in the knowledge of Christ, in the spiritual life, in faith. The cords and stakes—always found outside of the tent—were an image of the outward growth of the church, toward the world, toward the lost. We had to grow inward and outward, to the right and to the left.

And we did.

During those years, we started three other congregations in Morocco. One of them was in Melilla, a city about 300 miles from Tangier in Moroccan territory, although it has belonged to Spain since 1556. The Moroccan government has claimed it on numerous occasions, but Spain still considers it a Spanish city.

I would sometimes drive from Tangier to Melilla on roads in poor condition through the Rif mountains in north Morocco. Sometimes I would fly. Melilla authorities were very intolerant with those whom they called Protestants. I got in trouble with the police, and as a result was detained and fined several times.

We started another congregation in Larache. I told in Chapter 5 about how I was expelled from Morocco by the Moroccan government when I was going to Larache with a group of other young people to give testimony of Christ to some friends shortly after my conversion. After 1956, the situation changed.

Morocco declared itself an independent country. The French ceased to rule over the south and the Spanish left the north. I was free then to go to any city.

Larache is located forty-nine miles from Tangier. It was founded during the time of the Romans. It is a seaport on the Atlantic Ocean.

A third congregation was established in Tetuán, which up until then had been the capital of Spanish Morocco. It's located only thirty-six miles from Tangier. Tetuán was founded by the Carthaginians in the first century B.C. and is one of the oldest cities in Morocco.

In Melilla, as well as in Larache and Tetuán, we rented ground-floor facilities and furnished them with pews, a pulpit, and other items to make them fit for worship.

For a while, I preached in three of the four congregations on the same day. I had a very strong Renault car. I would preach in Tangier at 11 a.m., in Larache at 4 p.m., and in Tetuán at 7 p.m. I would come back to Tangier feeling very happy. I didn't know the meaning of the word tired. Those who do nothing get tired. Those who work don't get tired. I like to work—it fascinates me. My entire life I have been what you'd call a workaholic. I would rather live one year working than five years doing nothing. Work is the spice of life.

I went a step further. Tangier is only a two-hour boat ride away from the south of Spain. There are very nice ferries where you can park your car and disembark on the ports of Algeciras or Tarifa, the two Spanish cities that are closest to Africa.

Led by my evangelistic fervor, I entered Spain. Going from one country to the other was fast and easy.

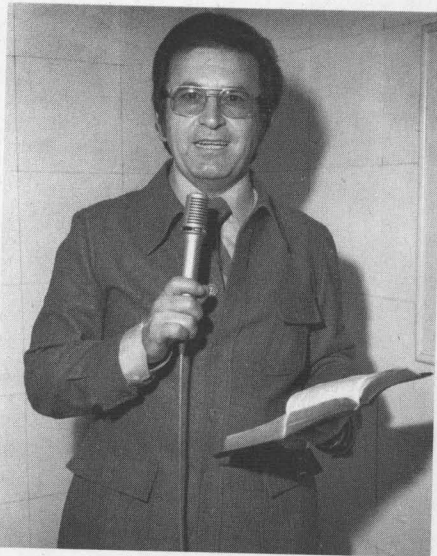
Spain has seventeen states, with Andalucía being the largest. Andalucía is in the south of Spain and is where you find cities that are well known all over the world: Seville, Granada, Córdoba, Málaga, and others. Nowadays, the population of Andalucía is nine million inhabitants. At the end of the 1950s, when I started evangelizing there, the population was six million. To me, those six million people on the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar represented a challenge. I began traveling back and forth by boat. I was able to make connections with small groups of Christians who worshipped God according to the

principles of the New Testament without being affiliated with any denomination. I would help them by preaching for them, giving them literature to read, or providing money for them to rent facilities. I would teach them the doctrinal principles of the New Testament as I practiced them. My right hand was in Morocco and my left hand was in Spain. I would obey the prophet Isaiah and extend myself in both directions carrying the word of God.

RADIO AND PRESS

In the summer of 1964, when I came in contact with the church of Christ in New York, I was told that there were about 3,000 congregations in the United States. How did I make it to the church of Christ on Highland Street in Abilene, Texas? Who led me there? It wasn't Ernest Sumerling, who would travel with me through several states. It was God. I never doubted that.

Back then I was passionate about radio. I had read several books on broadcasting and was convinced that in those years when there wasn't much television and the Internet was nonexistent, radio broadcasting was the most efficient way available to us to bring the gospel to thousands of people from a recording studio. The church



Juan Monroy speaking on the radio, 1976.

in Abilene was the only one in all the brotherhood that had a radio studio that broadcast for the whole country under the name of Herald of Truth.

God, who had been preparing me for this job, took me to the right church where I could develop my gifts as an author and broadcaster of Christian programs.

I started the radio ministry in Morocco.

At the beginning of 1955, Rubén Lores had rented an apartment in Tangier to start a radio station. He never saw this project through because of lack of funds. Besides, he had already decided to leave Morocco.

So, he contacted an evangelical leader of Jewish origin whose name was Ralph Freed. He was a missionary in Jordan and was experienced in radio broadcasting. When Freed arrived in Tangier, he paid Rubén Lores the amount of his investments and registered a license in his name that Lores had been granted by the Moroccan government for a radio station.

Ralph Freed had many contacts in the United States. He was wealthy. He left his apartment in the city and bought a large ranch outside of Tangier. He set up a powerful station that began broadcasting in Spanish, English, and French under the name of Trans World Radio.

He called me to his office and asked me to be in charge of the programs in Spanish. There actually wasn't anybody else in Tangier as prepared as I was for that job.

That's how I became the first Spanish broadcaster for Trans World Radio. When the Moroccan government withdrew the permit, Trans World Radio moved to Monte Carlo, then to Andorra, and finally to Quito, where it has become a well-known religious station worldwide. Ralph Freed passed away and was succeeded by his son Paul. I don't know who the director of the station is now.

I worked with Trans World Radio for only six months. When the problems in the church in Tangier started, which led me to dissolve the eldership, Ralph Freed sent me a message through Pedro Harayda. He wanted me to become a member of the *Iglesia en la Misión* (Church in the Mission) where he worked. I believe this was a Baptist Church. He promised I would have a significant monthly salary.

I said no. I didn't want to have anything to do with evangelical denominations.

I was a young thirty-year-old man, smart and hard working, with a clear vision for the ministry. Every denomination in Spain wanted a man like me. I received very tempting offers from Methodists, Southern Baptists, and from the Plymouth Brethren, among others. But I had a different vision of Christianity. None of these denominations had the doctrine that I had learned by reading the New Testament on my own. I did help the evangelical churches of Spain, but I didn't join any denomination. I was looking for a group of Christians who would be Christians only, without any denominational last names. I was certain that there had to be a group of Christians somewhere in the world who shared my beliefs. The churches that I established were simply called "churches." The church in Larache, the church in Tetuán, the church in Melilla, etc. More than enough.

During the months that I worked with Trans World Radio, I became excited about this form of communication. Radio broadcasting could reach thousands of people in their homes and in public places as well as men and women driving in the streets. The audience of a radio broadcast is large and varied. Not having to focus the eyes on anything makes communication a lot easier.

There were two important stations in Tangier during those times. They would broadcast on AM for Morocco and Spain: *Radio África* and *Radio Internacional*. They were commercial stations, not religious. I spoke with the director of *Radio Internacional* and told him I wanted to broadcast three fifteen-minute programs a week. He asked me to bring a few recorded programs so that he could listen to them. When I went back for an answer, he said he liked the programs. So I signed a contract for three weekly programs. They were broadcast at 8 a.m. with the name *La Estrella Matutina* (*The Morning Star*).

The program was more widely accepted than I expected. Letters started to arrive from the south and center of Spain. At church, we would answer all of them. The Biblical Society sent me free New Testaments that we would mail to the listeners. To this day, when I travel in Spain, I find men and women in Evangelical churches who used to listen to *La Estrella Matutina* of Tangier when they were very young.

I had two ministries: the churches and the radio. And I was thinking about publishing written work as well, which was my area of expertise.

Journalism began as a social science in the second part of the nineteenth century. Since then, the press has been used in some countries, especially in the United States, as a way to make religious truths known to fight atheistic materialism. I have always understood it this way: God is in the church! God is in the radio station! God is in the written word!

I decided to start a magazine. In January of 1956, the first forty-page issue titled *Luz y Verdad* (*Light and Truth*) was released. It was a bimonthly publication that I would send to addresses that I had of people in Spain and to listeners of *La Estrella Matutina*.

Luz y Verdad had three different approaches. I would do informative journalism, with news for which I would have a biblical application. I also did interpretative journalism, with articles that interpreted the message of the Bible and the doctrine of the New Testament. And I would also do opinion journalism, with articles focused on the social reality, giving my opinion under the light of God's revelation through Christ.

Luz y Verdad was widely accepted. Radio listeners would receive it free. Everyone else had to pay a subscription to get it. I used the postal service to send it to addresses in Spain. They wouldn't always reach their destination. The Spanish authorities would bring back a lot of packages. These difficulties discouraged me; so, the January-February 1959 issue was the last one I published.

I traveled to Spain by boat. I carried 1,000 issues hidden in different parts of my car. When I got off the boat, immigration officials searched the car. They took all 1,000 issues of *Luz y Verdad* and they had them destroyed. Nothing happened to me; they let me continue on my journey.

They won a battle, but they didn't win the war that I waged against the Catholic, fanatic, superstitious Spain. I continued publishing magazines. I still do today. I will tell about this in future chapters.

22

ONE YEAR IN LONDON— AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

There I was, in the year 1960 and thirty-one years old. I spoke, read, and wrote in three languages: Spanish, French, and Arabic, but my knowledge of the English language was very elementary. Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, English pastor, writer, and politician, said in the seventeenth century that a writer who can't read or speak in English is a rather illiterate writer. And he was right.

About two billion people today communicate in English in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and islands of the Caribbean like the Cayman Islands, among others. English is also spoken in countries of the Middle East, in African nations like South Africa and Nigeria, in India, and some other regions in Asia. English is a universal language. Furthermore, the best books on religion and atheism are written in English and have never been translated into Spanish or French.

I received a scholarship in 1960 and went to London. I was there for a full year, from January to December of 1961. I had to put off my radio and press activities. A young Spanish man, Miguel Quesada, took my place as a preacher in the church in Tangier.

I devoted many hours to learning the English language. I also enrolled in an advanced course in journalism.

As soon as I arrived in London, I came in contact with the literary circles there.

In 1958, I had published a strong book against the Spanish government titled *En defensa de los protestantes españoles (In Defense of the Spanish Protestants)*. I made it clear in the prologue that I wasn't defending any specific doctrine of Protestantism. I defended the people who were discriminated against by the Spanish government for not professing the Catholic religion. Very high fines were applied when there were more than twenty people meeting in a house. Christians were put in jail for testifying about their faith. Soldiers were put in jail for not attending Catholic Mass in the army. People were fired from their jobs for not being Catholic. Civil matrimony was prohibited. The dead were buried in areas of the cemetery destined for trash. The young were not admitted to college. Government administrative positions could not be filled by Protestants. Publication of Christian literature, including fliers, was not permitted. In Franco's Spain, Christians could not announce their activities through the press, radio, or any other means.

My book was published in Tangier, with the authorization of the Moroccan government. The first edition was soon sold out. A printing press in Barcelona, Spain, published a secret second edition that circulated all over the country. I sent the book to politicians of the Spanish government and also to all foreign embassies.

The consul of Spain in Tangier called me to his office one day. He asked me to give him ten books. He said that Secretary of State Fernando María Castiella wanted to read the book. Two weeks later, he called me again; he was furious. He showed me a letter written by the secretary of state of the Spanish government, but he didn't give it to me. Mr. Castiella said that, if what I said in the book was true, he would work to fix that situation. If it wasn't true, I was going to have a hard time and would have to face the consequences, even if I was outside of Spain.

Castiella, who was a sincere Catholic, ordered an investigation and was able to prove that everything I had written was true. I didn't have any problems continuing to travel to and work in Spain. On the contrary, I think he even gave orders that I be left alone.

When I arrived in London, my book was already known. A publishing company on the famous Fleet Street called The Protestant Trust Society proposed that my book be translated into English. And it was.

I devoted some time to oversee the translation. The director of the publishing company, K. W. Stone, who also wrote the prologue, assigned me some other jobs. At the same time, he put me in contact with religious newspapers in England that asked me to submit articles on specific topics. I earned money with the translation of my book and with the articles I wrote. I lived comfortably in London with my scholarship and the money I made.

In July of that same year, I received a call from an English lawyer, Peter Benenson. He said the director of the publishing company had given him my phone number. He had read the drafts and was amazed at the attitude of the Spanish government toward Protestants. He added, "Now I understand why President Truman didn't want to include Spain in the Marshall Plan that contributed to rebuild Europe after the devastation of World War II. It was because of the religious intolerance in that country."

He said he was going to introduce an organization in Paris that would fight against all kinds of discrimination, and he wanted me to go and speak at the inauguration ceremony. He would pay for my plane ticket and hotel stay.

So I went to Paris.

The founding meeting of Amnesty International took place in July at the Hotel Lutetia in the French capital. There were four speakers: Benenson himself, who introduced the ceremony; a Catholic priest from Barcelona who held communist ideas; a woman from the Belgian resistance during World War II; and myself. The woman and I spoke in French. Benenson and the Catholic priest spoke in English, and their speeches were translated into French.

That was the beginning of Amnesty International, which then was called Amnesty 61. I was one of the founders, of which I am very proud.

In October of 1962 in London, Benenson introduced the regulations of the organization, which by then was already registered as Amnesty International.

Through the years, this organization has played a very important role in the world. It's dedicated to the defense of those imprisoned because of racial, political, or religious reasons who have never taken part in violent acts. It also denounces the violation of human rights anywhere in the world. It denounces acts of torture and it opposes capital punishment. It doesn't pronounce itself either in favor or against political parties; it's impartial and objective.

I believe a Christian can freely be a part of an organization like this one, ruled by the same principles we find in the Bible.

In 1977, the Stockholm Academy awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Amnesty International. Part of that award belongs to me.

I returned to Tangier after my experience in England. I had achieved my purpose with hard work and a strong will. I could read, write, and speak in English. That Shakespearean English that I was taught in England was ruined in Texas. I now speak English like a cowboy from Abilene. But I'm happy with that.

23

RETURN TO TANGIER

In December of that same year, 1961, I ended my stay in London. It was a very productive year. Besides learning the English language, I learned many other things as well.

On December 15, I took a train to Paris. From there, I took a plane to Tangier. The first two books I read in English were two novels by Ernest Hemingway: *The Old Man and the Sea*, and *A Moveable Feast*. I would also read a few chapters of the Bible in English every day to continue practicing the language.

I got to work immediately. I took my place in the pulpit again as the preacher in the church. I continued my work with the printing press. I began broadcasting the program *La Estrella Matutina* again on Radio Internacional in Tangier.

And I started a new publication. This time, it wasn't a magazine. It was a tabloid-sized monthly publication called *La Verdad (The Truth)*. This Truth was different from the former *Light and Truth*. It was more confrontational, with more of a fighting spirit. Each issue would denounce the Catholic Church of Spain and the national government for their oppression of evangelicals and the lack of religious freedom in the country. *La Verdad* was sent to all foreign embassies represented in Morocco, to the offices of Amnesty International in

London, to the offices of the United Nations in Switzerland, and to other international organizations.

I continued traveling throughout Spain giving lectures and visiting independent churches.

I met a Baptist lawyer in Madrid whose name was José Cardona. He was secretary general for the *Comisión de Defensa Evangélica Española* (Spanish Evangelical Defense Commission). This entity was created by leaders from five denominations who worked in Spain to defend religious freedom and the human rights of Christians. There wasn't any talk of churches, or doctrine, or biblical interpretations in that commission. It was a type of Amnesty International. Although its leaders were all evangelical pastors, doctrinal issues were never discussed.

Years later, I was unanimously elected president of the commission for four different terms, sixteen years in total.

Cardona and I became close friends. He would send information to me in Tangier about the situation with the evangelicals, and I would publish everything in *La Verdad*. When there were serious problems, he would have me come to Madrid. Together, we talked with mayors who closed down church buildings, governors of states where Christians were fined for having more than twenty people gathered in one place, priests who didn't want to perform wedding ceremonies for young couples who were not Catholic, captains and colonels of the army who would force evangelicals to kneel down before images during the Catholic Mass, and other things like that.

In those times, there were about 50,000 evangelicals in Spain belonging to five denominations: Baptist, Methodist, Plymouth Brethren, Reformed, and Pentecostals. Cardona and I were known as the duo who defended their rights before the Spanish government. On more than one occasion, Cardona wanted me to become a member of his Southern Baptist Church. I would get mad at him when he brought up the topic. I would say to him, "We will continue to work so that Spain will have a law allowing religious freedom, like other European countries have, but don't talk to me about denominations. I am a Christian, and a Christian only. I don't want any denominations."

"Well, then, you will live and die alone," he would say.

"Maybe I won't. Some day, I will find Christians who share my beliefs."

Cardona the lawyer and Monroy the journalist had become known in all evangelical churches in Spain, because we worked on their behalf. They would call me "Monroy the independent."

During one of my trips to Madrid, Cardona said to me: "Come to my office, we have to talk about a very serious issue."

We went to his office. When we were sitting there, face to face, I asked him, "What do you want to talk to me about?"

He answered very calmly. "Monroy, I would like for you to move to Madrid."

"What for?"

"You are very needed here. The government wants to enact a law of religious freedom, but it has very strong opposition from Catholic bishops, fascist politicians, and some secretaries in the government itself."

"And what can I do?"

"You can do a lot. You are already well known for your books and your articles. They know you are a founder of Amnesty International. It's true that you have enemies in the country, even among some evangelical leaders. But you and I working together can do much on behalf of the people of Spain. Besides, you have written a significant book on the topic."

I wasn't sure, and I told him that. "My work is in Morocco."

Cardona, who was very smart, replied: "Your work was there. It's not anymore. Your time in Morocco is up. You are much more needed in Spain."

That my time in Morocco was coming to an end was true. On March 3, 1956, Morocco declared its independence from France followed by independence from Spain a month later. Tangier lost its rights as an international city and was incorporated into the rest of the country. Europeans began leaving Morocco. There were no jobs, since priority was given to Moroccans. The French and the Spaniards, who had ruled the country before, came to be foreigners in the independent Morocco. The four churches stopped growing in the early 1960s. The French were returning to France and the Spaniards to Spain. We didn't have any more visitors in our services.

I told Cardona I would think about it.

When I talked to my wife about it, she opposed the idea. She had been born and raised in Morocco. She still had her job in the bank. The Spanish adventure scared her.

I was contemplating the possibility of being more active in the work of the Lord by living in Spain. Today, Spain's population is forty-five million, of which five million are immigrants from Morocco, Romania, and many Latin American countries.

Mercedes was right in not wanting to leave Morocco. I was also right in wanting to move to Spain. She was concerned about her home. I considered the great possibilities that Spain offered during those difficult years. It was then that, during my daily Bible readings, I found this advice from David the Psalmist, "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).

I did just that. I committed everything unto God, I trusted, and I waited in him.

24

IMPRISONED IN SPAIN

It was April of 1963. I had a Dauphin automobile, a Renault made in France and bought in Tangier. I took a boat to Algeciras intending to drive to Madrid on the highway.

When I embarked at the port in Tangier, I ran into a young man from Larache, whom I had met a while back. He was on his way to Barcelona, so I told him I could give him a ride to Madrid. He was happy to be able to travel together.

We arrived in Algeciras. When I showed my passport to the immigration authorities, the official asked me:

“Are you Juan Antonio Monroy?”

“Yes.”

“I’m sorry, you have to come to the police -station.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. Those are the orders we have here.”

“Where do I leave my car?”

“Drive up to the police station. Someone will escort you.”

My friend from Larache disappeared—vanished.

At the police station, the same question: “Are you Juan Antonio Monroy?”

"Yes."

"You have to be imprisoned."

"Why?"

"I don't know, we have orders to do so."

"Can I call my family in Tangier?"

"Not from here. When you get to the prison, ask the director to let you call."

"What do I do with my car?"

"A police officer will go with you. Another officer will follow you. Leave the car in the garage he will show you, and then they will take you to prison."

I insisted: "Can you tell me why I'm being imprisoned?"

"I don't know."

It was true; he didn't know, he was only following orders.

When I got to the prison, the director was waiting for me in his office. He had been forewarned.

"Leave all your belongings here, including all the money you have."

I had 25,000 *pesetas*, which at the time was a significant amount.

"Where are you going with so much money?" he asked.

"The money is mine," I replied.

"All right, we will put the money away. If you need some while you are in prison, you can use it, but let me know beforehand."

I thought I was having a nightmare. I didn't understand anything. So I asked again: "What crime am I being accused of? Why am I being imprisoned? Can I call a lawyer?"

"When it's necessary. But not now."

"Can I call my family in Tangier so that they know what is happening?"

"Not from here. You should have done that at the station."

"Over there, they told me to call when I got here."

"I'm sorry. Prison regulations don't allow it."

He put me in a cell by myself, for which I thanked him.

The next morning, I got my first breakfast. The person in charge of distributing meals was a round-faced, bold, short man who always looked angry.

He wore blue overalls; I never saw him wearing anything else. In the following days, I wrote a long poem dedicated to the man in the blue overalls. I still keep that poem.

Breakfast that morning was repulsive to me. Brown hot water with a day-old piece of bread.

Lunch was even less edible. Some tiny lentils floating in a blackish broth. I called the overalls man. I told him I couldn't eat that. I asked if I could order food from a nearby restaurant. The director had my money. The overalls man consulted with the director. When he said he had authorized it, I felt like heaven had been opened up for me. He gave me the amount I asked him for. He sent a young man of about twenty-five to run the errand. I gave him a list of the foods I wanted and a generous tip when he came back.

Following that, he would come every day at breakfast, lunch, and dinner time, and I would raise his tip.

On the third day, I spoke to him and asked him if he worked there.

"No," he answered, "I'm a prisoner here as well, but they use me for errands."

"Why are you here?"

"I'm from San Roque [a town near Algeciras]. My girlfriend got pregnant. I told her I wasn't going to marry her and I was condemned to one month in jail, which will be up in one more week."

At that moment, I felt God was coming to my rescue. That man was going to be my angel of deliverance. I felt it since our first conversation, and God didn't let me down.

A few days later, I wrote a telegram to Mercedes Zardain in Madrid. It read: "I'm in jail in Algeciras. Let Vellvé know."

Mercedes Zardain wasn't working for me yet. She had a well-paid job. Fluent in English, she was secretary for the chief colonel at the U.S. Air Base in Torrejón, outside of Madrid.

Ernesto Vellvé was a lawyer friend of mine who was extremely intelligent. Back then, he was in charge of the legal department in *La Unión y el Fénix*, an important insurance company. I gave the errand guy two bills of one hundred

pesetas each. The telegram would not cost more than 15 or 20. So I said to him, "Before bringing me my food, stop by the post office and send this telegram. It's nothing important," I said because I didn't want to alarm him, "they just won't let me out and I don't want to bother the director. Keep the change."

He did everything to the letter.

The Eternal God supervised everything. He put the means at my fingertips and I used them. I had been in jail for seven days when the director came to my cell one night at 10. In his right hand he held a telegram, curiosity and surprise lurking in his eyes. He said, "I have received a telegram from a court in Madrid ordering me to set you free."

"Well, do it."

"But how do they know in Madrid that you are in jail here?"

"You haven't told them?"

"No, not yet."

"When were you going to do it?"

"Later. According to normal procedures, I would consult with Madrid and then I would send you there with an escort by train."

"Why all this? What crime am I being accused of?"

"I don't know. My orders were to imprison you when the police brought you and then communicate it to Madrid."

He was telling the truth. The very director of the jail ignored the reason for my arrest. Back then Tangier was a den of anti-Franco Spaniards who had arrived from France to be closer to the country whose regime they were still trying to fight. Two socialist journalists would visit me from time to time and bring me the newspaper called *El Socialista*, published in France. Since he didn't have any more information, the jail director thought that I could be a political activist.

That's not what it was about. I have always kept myself away from politics and politicians, whom—except for a few exceptions—I consider to be more interested in the position and the money than in the people whom they should serve.

The long arm that threw me in the jail in Algeciras was the Catholic Church's arm. I had stopped the publication of the magazine *Luz y Verdad*. In its place, I started a newspaper titled *La Verdad*. It was on fire. Its pages denounced the constant violations against Protestants in Spain, the lack of freedom, the oppression of the Catholic Church. *La Verdad* would bother the Spanish bishops more than the government. They didn't give up until they were able to have the Moroccan government embalm the magazine. I will tell about this in another chapter.

What means did Ernesto Vellvé use to make my freedom possible? He never told me. He knew judges and other important people in the Department of Justice. While we were eating dinner at a restaurant in Madrid some time later, he only said, "You are free, it's over."

He was very observant; he would explore the soul of the person in front of him, but he didn't talk much.

Free! When the jail director came to my cell at 10 p.m., I noted that he was upset.

"I have treated you kindly," he said. "I allowed you to buy your own food, which I don't normally do with other prisoners."

It was true. He gave me everything that I had handed in when I first arrived, including the money. He even put up with my reading of the poem I had written for the man in the blue overalls. Then he concluded, "Prisoners who are set free are released between 10 a.m. and noon. But because of this telegram from Madrid, I will let you go right now."

And he did.

I left and took the first taxi I found. It took me to the garage. I started my Renault and took the highway to Málaga, stopping at the Hotel Don Pepe in Marbella. I grabbed a bite of *tortilla*¹ to eat, I filled the bathtub with bubbles and stayed in the water for more than half an hour.

1 Translator's note: *Tortilla* is a typical potato dish in Spain, not the flour or corn tortilla known in the United States

I had experienced jail during my military service. But the cell in Algeciras to me was gloomier, more grave-like. Repression of the flesh is bitter, but even more so is repression of the spirit.

PROBLEMS WITH THE MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT

José Cardona was right: my time in Morocco had come to an end, or it was about to. The bishop of Tangier said I was like a thorn in the flesh of his Catholic church. Monroy the journalist, not Monroy the person. Since he could influence the Moroccan government (Catholic bishops have direct or indirect influence on all governments), he was willing to have me expelled from Morocco. He didn't care whether I went to Spain or not; all he wanted was to have me leave his territory and let other bishops control me in Spain.

He set out to do just that, and he accomplished his goal. As it is habitual in the Catholic hierarchy, he wasn't man enough to take responsibility for it and do it face to face.

I would write the articles for the newspaper *La Verdad* in an office that I had on Delacroix Street. A big window faced the Hotel Tangier. That's where I prepared the packages that I sent to Spain. One day, toward the end of 1963, several Moroccan police officers came to my office. They turned everything over and took my passport and all the issues of *La Verdad* that they could find.

I later received a citation from the judge of the Moroccan Court. I went with a lawyer whose name I can't remember. He was a Frenchman of Jewish origin. Sitting there in front of the judge—a slender, short young man educated in the French area of Morocco—I understood right away that the judge himself didn't know neither the name of the person who had made the formal complaint against me and the newspaper nor the reasons for that complaint. The search warrant and home arrest orders had come from Rabat, the capital. Helped by the lawyer, I confirmed that the complaint had been filed by the bishop of Tangier. Showing his ignorance on the topic, the judge thought this was a political issue. When they translated some of the articles of *La Verdad* for him, he began to understand. I weighed my options and asked the lawyer to let me do the talking. "I have been reported for saying in writing that religious images offend God," I said.

"I believe so myself," said the judge.

"And also for saying that a man can't forgive the sins of another man," I continued.

"It's true," answered the judge.

"And for saying that the Pope is not God's representative on earth."

"True."

I kept listing a series of doctrinal and dogmatic issues before this judge who, being a Muslim, would undoubtedly agree with me.

At the door, the lawyer said to me:

"You don't need me. You have convinced the judge by talking to him about religion."

I was summoned again a month later. My passport was on the judge's table. He gave it back to me and said I could leave the country whenever I wanted. He didn't hug me or anything, but we got acquainted a bit, especially when I told him I was born in Rabat—like he was—and I spoke to him in Arabic. Then he told me the story. The bishop of Tangier had filed a complaint before the central authorities against the newspaper and against me. From Rabat, they ordered the judge to investigate and they took my passport. At the first appearance, not even the judge knew what I was being accused of.

He was just following orders from the capital. He thought it was about political opposition to the Spanish regime. Tangier was always full of both supporters and opponents of all kinds of regimes.

I couldn't do anything against the bishop; I lacked evidence. I still don't have any. All I had was the Arab judge's confidential information during an informal conversation. Quoting him would have been difficult and dangerous. The judge told me I couldn't publish *La Verdad* anymore.

Indeed, I had no future in Morocco. I had decided to move to Spain. But I wanted to travel to the United States first. I had invitations for lectures on literature and on the "Song of Songs." I consider myself an expert in that book by Solomon. I am writing a commentary in three volumes. I am taking my time doing it, since I always have urgent things to do.

I sold the printing press and devoted my time to prepare my trip to the United States of North America.

That year, 1964, was the happiest year of my life.

I came across the church of Christ. The church didn't find me; I found the church.

TRIP TO NEW YORK

Between 1955 and 1964, I had written and published seven books and started two magazines: *Luz y Verdad* and *La Verdad*. All of this literature had circulated around New York, where there were 400 Hispanic churches of different denominations. I was well known by many Evangelical leaders. I received invitations to speak at conferences. A Russian preacher named Miloslav Baloum was the one who insisted the most that I go to New York. He was a sixty-year-old single preacher in a large independent church in the Bronx. He had an apartment with five bedrooms. In his letters, he said I could stay with him for as long as I wished.

I accepted the invitation.

I arrived in New York the second week of June. My first activity was teaching the "Song of Songs" in Baloum's congregation for four nights.

There was a Protestant Spanish newspaper published daily in New York and aimed mainly at the many Puerto Ricans and Dominicans there. I spoke with the director and he asked me to contribute to the paper with social and literary articles. I was interviewed at length, and they illustrated the interview with several pictures. After that interview, I received many phone calls inviting me to different events. *The Centro Andaluz* of New York asked me to speak

in three conferences about Andalusian poets. (Andalucía is the largest state in southern Spain). I spoke about Juan Ramón Jiménez, Antonio Machado, and Federico García Lorca, the three most famous poets of the twentieth century.

I was busy four or five days of each week with conferences, for which I received compensation.

I felt very comfortable at Baloum's house. I respected his work schedule and he respected mine. At night, we would talk about Christianity. He couldn't understand how someone with my skills was not a member of any powerful denomination or evangelical organization. I explained to him what I believed. He had a fixed idea: God's will is for the world to be ruled by authentic Christians.

I received an invitation from a church in Brooklyn to speak about the religious issues in Spain. When I got there, there were about 1,000 people. When I finished, the pastor invited me to eat dinner. I remember his last name was Soto, he was from Puerto Rico, and president of the Spanish-speaking Northern Baptists. I was acquainted with the Southern Baptists in Spain, but I wasn't aware of the existence of the Northern Baptists. I don't know if there are also Eastern and Western Baptists. Over dinner, I realized where the conversation was headed. Sure enough, he told me that the Northern Baptists didn't have churches in Spain and said if I wanted to work with them, they could support me financially.

Naturally, I said no. I told him I had different doctrinal principles.

On another occasion, I got a call from Connecticut. They also wanted the four presentations on the "Song of Songs." It was a congregation of about 700 members. I spoke on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The preacher was a very nice young man from Puerto Rico. He was one of the leaders of the Disciples of Christ. He made the same offer to work with them in Spain.

When people found out that I didn't belong to any denomination, they would make offers. The doctrine of the Disciples of Christ appealed more to me than that of the Baptists. Not long after researching them, I realized they were too liberal. Back then, I didn't know that the Disciples of Christ had been a part of the Restoration Movement started by Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone.

Spaniards who travel overseas and stay there over two months have to present ourselves at the Embassy or Consulate of Spain. This isn't necessarily to be checked but rather for the embassy to know how we can be reached in case of a contingency.

The Embassy of Spain was in Washington, so I went to the Consulate of Spain in New York and gave my Bronx address and phone number to the official. When he saw my name, he said: "Wait a moment, please."

He came back after ten minutes and had me go in the consul's office. The Spanish diplomat welcomed me very kindly.

"You are Juan Antonio Monroy?"

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"You are a writer, right?"

"Yes, a Christian writer."

"Last year, a publisher in Madrid published a book by you called *The Bible in El Quixote*."

"Yes, that is correct, and it was a best seller in Spain."

He continued: "Well, we have that book in the Spanish pavilion at the World Fair in New York. It's selling quite well. Everything related to the Bible sells well in this country, even more so if you put the Quixote and the Bible together."

That made me very happy.

The consul kept on talking: "I want to ask you a favor."

"What is it?"

"I want to ask you to stop by the pavilion three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon for a week."

"What for?"

"Just to be there, talk to people, and sign copies of the book. We will naturally pay you for this job."

I immediately accepted. Not because of the money, but to serve my country and have the opportunity to talk to people about the Bible.

I like reading literature by Thomas Jefferson a lot. Maybe it's because, besides being a politician, he was also an intellectual in love with the French

culture. He used to say: don't ask anything of life, and someday life will surprise you.

Life in New York was giving me a lot of surprises. But the biggest one of all was yet to come.

THE PROTESTANT PAVILION AND BILLY GRAHAM

During the time I was at the World Fair in New York, I visited the Protestant pavilion several times, also known as the Ecumenical Pavilion. It intrigued me more than the others did. This pavilion was large, spectacular, and attractive. All the main Protestant denominations had their stands there. That all seemed crazy to me. I had researched Protestant ecumenism and learned that it had its beginnings in Edinburgh, Scotland, back in 1910. At almost the same time, the Lutheran archbishop of Uppsala, Sweden, organized another movement that he called "Life and Work," while Charles Brent, a leader from the Episcopal Church in the United States, founded the "Faith and Order" movement. So Scotland, Sweden, and the United States contributed to writing the first chapter of the Protestant ecumenical movement between 1910 and 1911.

What did this movement expect? An impossible mission: to unite in one body the more than three thousand Protestant denominations that exist in the world.

More than an ecumenical thing, the Protestant pavilion seemed like syncretism to me, wanting to give the illusion of unity regardless of what each

believes. This leads to complete confusion because people don't know what to believe or where to find the truth.

One day, I visited the Billy Graham Association stand. The abundance of money was evident there. It was a luxurious stand, very well set up with a wide variety of ads. I spoke with one of the directors of the pavilion for two hours. I introduced myself and told him who I was and what I did. He was very interested in my work. He said that in a couple of days, Billy Graham himself would be there to supervise the work being done in the pavilion, and this man would introduce me to the famous evangelist. He said Graham would like to meet me. Back in those times, Billy Graham didn't have a representative in Spain, and he wanted one.

I didn't go, but I came in contact again with the Billy Graham Association years later. Billy Graham's committee organized a congress in Pattaya, Thailand, June 16-27, 1980. Attendance at the congress was by invitation only. Only nine hundred people were present.

During that time, I was living in Madrid. I was known as a religious leader of the church of Christ. I had written and published a book titled *Evolución y Marxismo (Evolution and Marxism)*, in which I compared the theory of evolution and the Marxist philosophy to Christianity. The organizers of the congress in Pattaya were told that I was a specialist in Marxism. I received an invitation to attend and was asked to give five lectures on Marxism and Christianity.

I accepted.

They paid for my plane ticket and hotel stay in Pattaya and gave me a check for a thousand dollars.

Billy Graham could not attend the conference; his doctors advised against such a long trip. The congress was presided over by his brother-in-law, Leighton Ford. We met during breakfast the first day and spoke for about fifteen minutes. Ford told me that he wanted to meet with me before the congress was over.

He kept his word, and we had the interview. One afternoon, he called me to his office in the hotel and we talked. He told me he had received good comments about my presentations. And then he presented the main reason for the interview. They were looking for a good Spanish-speaking evangelist for

Latin America. Besides being an evangelist, I was also an intellectual. I was the man they were looking for. He said I would have to move to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and travel to other countries on the continent from there. We did not talk about salary, but he hinted that the work would be very well paid; it was an important position.

I declined. I told him my doctrine did not agree with theirs.

"What differences are there?" he asked. Then added, "We don't want to hire you to teach doctrine, but to preach the gospel."

"All right," I said. "Imagine I'm preaching to a thousand people. After the sermon, what do I say? Do I ask if there's anybody who wants to raise his hand, accept Christ, and be saved?"

"Exactly," Ford said. "That is what we do in our campaigns."

"I don't," I replied. "I ask who wants to be baptized. I get together with those who respond to explain to them what baptism is all about, and then I immerse them in water and baptize them for the forgiveness of their sins."

I could tell that Ford was uncomfortable. But he insisted: "You don't need to baptize them. After accepting Christ, they join the church of their choice and can be baptized there."

At that moment, I stood up, thanked him for the invitation to the congress, for the thousand dollars, and for giving me the opportunity of a preaching ministry in Latin America. But before leaving, I said: "I'm sorry, Mr. Ford. I try to follow the New Testament doctrine and can't compromise my convictions."

He got up to open the door for me, he gave me a card with his address and phone numbers and said: "If you change your mind, give me a call; there will always be room for you in our association."

I didn't change my mind. Ever. Don Quixote said to Sancho: "I know who I am." And Paul wrote this statement: "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12).

I, too, know whom I have believed, and I know that no such offer will make me stray from my faith in the Christianity of the New Testament.

Bertrand Russell was one of the greatest European philosophers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He was born in 1872 in Gales, Great

Britain, and died in 1970. He wrote about forty books, one of which was titled *Why I Am Not a Christian*. It was an atheistic book. When I read it, I wrote a long forty-page article that I titled "Why I Am a Christian." This article consisted of two parts. In the first part, I explained to Russell why I am a Christian. The second part told what kind of Christian I am.

Christianity is fragmented into four major religions: the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church, and the Protestant churches. At the same time, these four religions are divided into hundreds and thousands of subdivisions and organizations.

That's not the Christianity I believe in. I believe in the Christianity that Paul defined as the "church of Christ" (Romans 16:16).

I belong to the church of Christ because it has a biblical name.

I belong to the church of Christ because this church was founded by Jesus.

I belong to the church of Christ because it doesn't have a central organization, it doesn't have a Vatican.

I belong to the church of Christ because each church has its own elders, deacons, and preacher.

I belong to the church of Christ because its only law is the Bible.

I belong to the church of Christ because it has a clear, simple, and complete doctrine.

I belong to the church of Christ because it provides human beings with a perfect and complete plan of salvation as found in the New Testament.

I belong to the church of Christ because its worship is based on the teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

I belong to the church of Christ because of these and other reasons.

I don't want a Billy Graham Association. I don't want southern, northern, eastern, or western Baptists. I don't want Methodist or Pentecostal, Presbyterian or Episcopal.

I want what I have: the simple and sound doctrine of the New Testament, the doctrine that the Christians of the first century believed and practiced.

FINDING THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Paul the apostle was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, which was the center of the Greek culture (Acts 21:39). He came from a very religious Jewish family from the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). From a very early age, he was educated in the strict principles of the Pharisees. When he was five years old, as was customary among Jews, he learned how to read the Hebrew scriptures. He was fifteen years old (some biographers say he was twelve) when he was sent to Jerusalem to be educated in the traditions and methods of the rabbis. In Jerusalem, he was a disciple of the famous Jewish theologian Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

When Paul heard the voice of Christ on his way to Jerusalem from Damascus, he was thirty years old. The conversion of a person to Christ cannot be rationally or psychologically explained. It's a result of God's grace.

Paul was chosen to carry the gospel to the world when he was practicing the laws of Judaism (Acts 9:15). I was chosen for the same purpose while I was practicing the Marxist philosophy.

Why did God wait thirty years to reveal the true faith in Christ to Paul? Why didn't he do it before? I don't know. Nobody knows. God's mind is inscrutable.

I was baptized for the forgiveness of my sins in 1950. I found the church of Christ in 1964. Why did God wait fourteen years to guide my steps to his church? Why didn't he do it before? I don't know. Jesus told Peter: "You do not realize now what I'm doing, but later you will understand" (John 13:7). *Later* was not the next day or the next year. *Later* was eternity. In eternity, everything that we don't understand here will be explained to us. I will ask God why it took him fourteen years to reveal the church of Christ to me.

This is how it happened. I was walking around the Protestant pavilion one morning and analyzing the exhibits of the many religious groups represented there. I wanted to write an article about that show. I saw a small stand with a sign that read: "The churches of Christ salute you." At the stand, there was a man in a yellow jacket. I figured he was around thirty-five years old, slender, not too tall, round face. I think he practiced smiling as a social obligation. I later learned that his name was Tom Isaac. He has already passed away; he died of cancer. Back then, he was the preacher for the Gentilly Church of Christ in New Orleans. I stopped to read the titles on some fliers and books that were exhibited and then kept walking. Tom called me and asked in English, "Would you sign this book and write your name and address?"

I did it quite unwillingly and continued walking around the fair. Tom called me again.

"I saw that you are Spanish," he said.

"Yes, although I live in Morocco, where I was born."

"If you are Spanish, then you must be Catholic," he continued.

"No," I replied. "I'm not Catholic. I'm a Christian."

Tom's smile turned even bigger, more personal, more sincere. His small, lively eyes expressed excitement, interest. He said, "Shake my hand, I'm a Christian too!"

I extended my hand only for the sake of formality. I thought inside of me, "This guy thinks I'm stupid." Next, I told him what was in my heart: "No, you are not a Christian. I don't know what that Church of Christ thing is, but you are in the same pavilion with the rest of the Protestants. So you must be another Protestant sect."

I noticed I had made him nervous, restless; he responded with a flood of words as if he wanted to teach me in just a few minutes everything he had learned throughout his life.

“We are not Protestants,” he emphasized, “we are the true church of Christ. We are here because we can’t have a pavilion of our own. Stay with me and I will explain to you what our doctrine and beliefs are.”

At thirty-five years old, I had enough experience in life to know that standing before me was a sincere man. The look in our eyes is the only thing we can’t hide. In Tom Isaac’s look, there was sort of a plea; he wanted to be heard.

I stayed there with him.

As soon as it was possible, I told him who I was. I told him about my conversion, my work in literature and in the radio, my books, the congregations I had established in Morocco and Spain, how I had declined the invitation to work with any Protestant denomination, and my hope of some day finding other Christians who thought as I did.

Tom’s growing emotions expressed themselves in the form of questions, gestures, excitement, and I believe even in the rhythm of his heart. Then he explained to me the doctrine of the church of Christ, how the congregations were organized, and their characteristic zeal for evangelism.

Now I was the amazed one. As he was talking, my interest kept growing and caused my eyes and my senses to open up even more. The value of an idea is measured by the interest that it awakens in others. Everything Tom was saying was penetrating my mind.

I said goodbye and promised to come back the next day to continue studying together.

We spent four days studying the New Testament and the doctrine of the church. I was amazed; that man could recite doctrinal concepts that I had always believed in and refute others that I refuted as well. We agreed on everything in our analysis of the divine Word.

In one of his speeches to the Jews, Jesus said to them, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39). This concept is found

throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Galatians, going through Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and the epistle to the Romans.

I had eternal life, I didn't doubt that. The Lord gave me eternal life the day I was baptized for the remission of my sins. But Christ's statement in the Gospel of John, which can be interpreted in both the indicative and imperative forms, not only instructs us to know the Scriptures, but also to examine thoroughly, deeply, and genuinely. The Jews thought they knew the Scriptures, but they were not capable of seeing Christ's divine nature in them. So much religion had left them blind to understanding God's mysteries.

I knew the Bible, I practiced and taught the Bible, and I had my own ideas about the doctrine of Christ. My conversations with Tom Isaac were a confirmation that I was on the right path and that there were millions of people in the world—especially in the United States—who believed as I did. I was not alone.

Tom Isaac served his time at the stand of the church of Christ and returned to New Orleans. One day before his departure, he introduced me to another brother, Ernest J. Sumerlin. He was a preacher in a small English-speaking congregation in the city of New York. He was about fifty-five years old then; a tall, strong, robust man. Sumerlin said he wanted to continue studying the doctrine of the church with me. I didn't really need it; I had already clarified with Tom Isaac everything that I was interested in clarifying. But I agreed and we met over the course of several days.

Sumerlin had an obsession: he wanted me to go with him to Abilene, Texas. "Why Abilene?" I asked him. "So you can see large congregations there and meet other brethren," he answered.

Years later, I thought that, to E.J. Sumerlin, Abilene was like the Vatican of the church of Christ. If you wanted to be sanctified, you had to go to Abilene, Texas.

During those times, I had to make a trip to Puerto Rico. There was a Bible institute there associated with the University of San Juan that invited me to do four presentations.

I told Sumerlin about it.

"When I come back from Puerto Rico, I'll go to Abilene with you."

He didn't believe me. He said, "When you come back from Puerto Rico, I will never see you again."

"I promise you I will," I replied. "I am as interested as you are in me seeing the churches in Texas."

When I came back from Puerto Rico, I went to Texas.

THE HIGHLAND CHURCH IN ABILENE, TEXAS

When we were at the airport in New York, ready to board the plane to Dallas, Sumerlin said to me, "We are not going to Abilene just yet. We will make a stop in Boston, and then we will take another plane to San Antonio."

I asked, "Why Boston and San Antonio?"

He replied, "There is a lectureship going on in Boston right now with elders, deacons, preachers, and other members of the church who come from different parts of the country. I have spoken on the phone with the organizers and have asked that they let you speak for about thirty or forty minutes. My father lives in San Antonio; I want us to spend two or three days there as well."

We went from New York to Boston on a quick flight. I don't remember the place where the conference was being held. About a thousand people were present, and Sumerlin introduced me briefly. I used all forty minutes preaching in English. I said who I was, where I was coming from, and told them about how I had found the church of Christ in New York and what my future projects were. I think my words made an impact, not because of my preaching style, but rather because of what I said. I was a man who had been working alone for

years. At the exhibit of the church of Christ at the World Fair in New York, I had discovered the church and brethren who thought as I did. It was this story that the audience fell in love with, and I was highly commended.

From Boston, we flew to San Antonio. Sumerlin's father lived alone on a large ranch. I stayed there three days. Sumerlin called a meeting of preachers in San Antonio and nearby towns. We met for a meal on a Friday at noon. Again, Sumerlin introduced me to the preachers, and spoke as if he were the hero of the story and I were a hunter's trophy. It didn't bother me. I explained to the preachers the same things I had shared in Boston.

In Abilene, Sumerlin and I met with the elders of the church that worshipped on Highland Street and told them my story. The elders asked me to preach on a Sunday during the morning service.

Sitting on the platform next to the pulpit, I observed everything while the congregation sang. I had never seen an auditorium like that: it was very large, clean, with carpet on the floor, wide comfortable pews, acoustics that allowed the voices to flow with absolute clarity across the whole building, Bibles and song books in each pew, a quick and orderly plan for the distribution of the bread, the cup, and the offerings; short, to-the-point prayers, voices that sounded like angels singing hymns—some of which I knew in Spanish—two thousand people sitting in silence and respect, and four thousand eyes focused on the man who had come from Spain.

Paul says that God distributes gifts as he wishes. He gave me a strong, well-modulated, attractive voice, ideal for the radio and for speaking in public. I confess that the atmosphere didn't intimidate me; I was more or less used to it. What did intimidate me was having to preach in English to two thousand people. My knowledge of the language was limited. I provided the desire and the will, and God did the rest.

I spoke when it was my turn. Sumerlin did not introduce me this time. Mid McKnight—then preacher of the congregation—introduced me. I chose Acts 21:19 as my text. In Paul's fifth trip to Jerusalem after his conversion, he met with the elders of the church and, after greeting them, he "reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry."

This is what I did as well in forty minutes before those two thousand people that Sunday. I told them in detail all that God had done through me since the day of my baptism. I clearly explained my project to leave Morocco and move to Spain to establish the church there, and I ended with a call to evangelism: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

When I finished speaking, Mid McKnight came to the pulpit and said to the congregation: "We are in a Sunday worship, so clapping wouldn't be right. But I will do something I have never done in my years as a preacher. I will ask all of you who have felt edified by brother Monroy's words to stand up."

I don't think there was one single person who remained seated.

When the last prayer was said, many came and congratulated me. A man about my age whose name was Bob Bailey said that he was a deacon in the church and wanted me to go eat at his house when I finished talking with the brethren. I went with him. After the meal, he gathered his family in the living room: his wife, Ruth, and his three children, Bryan, Becky and Lynn. He spoke with them and said: "This man wants to establish the church in Spain. We have to help him. We will give him a check for \$250. Do you all agree?" They all said yes. He was the first Christian in the United States who gave money for Spain.

Bob took me to his office. He said that several deacons would speak with the elders that afternoon to ask them to hire me as a missionary of the Highland Church to Spain. The initiative took on life. Art Haddox, who was the secretary representing the elders, wanted to meet with me Tuesday night.

So there I was. There were fourteen elders. All of them were older men dressed in dark suits, white shirts, and neckties with very few colors, and with serious faces and scrutinizing looks. They were elders like those "back in the day," with a thorough knowledge of the Bible, strong in the faith, in love with their work, caring for the sheep among them, and being an example to all (1 Peter 5:2-3).

I progressively learned all this as I got to know them better over the next few months. But that night, I was under the impression that I was before a jury.

Haddox started the meeting. He said that the elders were interested in supporting me financially in Spain if I left Morocco. "Before making a decision, we need to know if you have a solid knowledge of the doctrine of the church. We would like to ask you a few questions," he said.

A few? I was bombarded with questions. The first one asked if I had been baptized for the forgiveness of my sins or just as a testimony of my faith. That was as clear to me as the clean blood that flowed throughout my body. They were satisfied with the answer about that topic.

The fourteen men didn't ask all the questions they wanted. We met again on Wednesday and on Thursday. They wanted to know all about me. I remember the last question, which was asked by an elder named Blodget: "Brother Monroy, what do you think about the millennium?"

I was unsettled by this question. Deep inside I thought that if I said what I thought about the topic, all was lost. "This is as far as you get, Juan Antonio," I said to myself.

Of course, I had studied the topic of the millennium. I knew that, among the Protestant denominations, there were premillennial and postmillennial



Monroy conferring with Batsell Barrett Baxter in Abilene, Texas.

believers. I was in the amillennial line of thought; I didn't believe in a literal millennium. I didn't know whether the church of Christ was pre or post, but I had to be honest with them and with myself, so I answered: "I don't believe in the millennium, brother Blodget. I don't think there will be a millennium either before or after Christ comes back to earth. The resurrected Christians and those who are transformed will be caught up together with them to meet our Lord in the air."

Blodget stood up, hugged me, and said: "We are now convinced that you are a Christian who is sound in doctrine."

This third meeting ended with hugs and smiles.

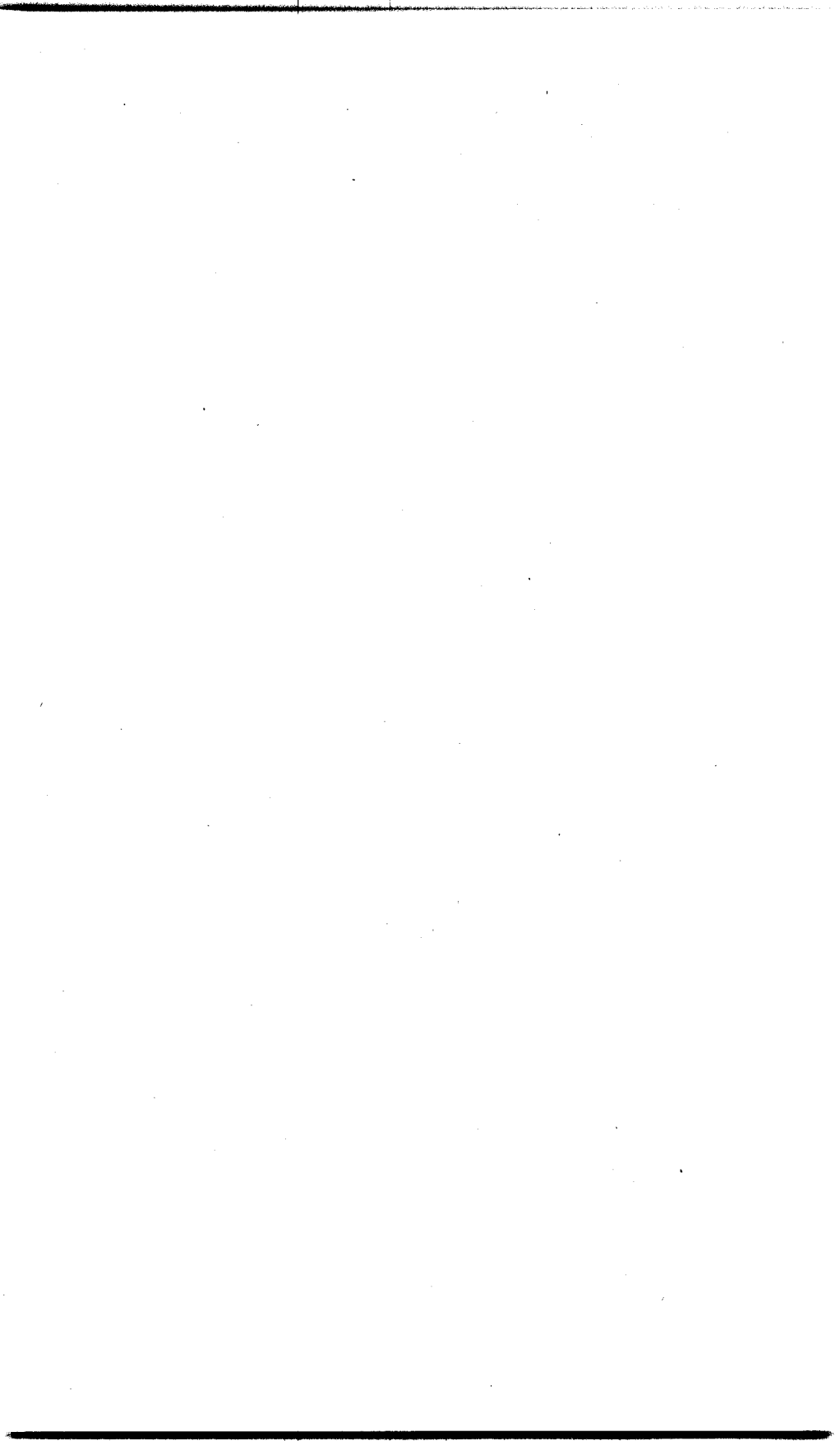
Three days later, Art Haddox called me into his office. He said that the elders had decided that I would work in Spain as a missionary of Highland. It was November of 1964. The financial support would begin in January of the following year. He added that the elders had also agreed to support Ernest J. Sumerlin in Spain to help me in my work.

I spoke with my wife on the phone that night and told her everything. She was not very happy because she didn't want to leave Morocco. But she promised to go with me to Spain if I thought my place was there.

Yes, I believed my place was there. I knew the religious situation in Spain all too well and wanted to establish the church of Christ in the country where my mother had been born and where I had many friends.

Did I go to bed happy that night?

I went to bed happy because I was going to work with a large church with elders who were faithful to the Bible. At the same time, I was concerned about the responsibility that all that entailed. I accepted everything as the will of God and put it all in his hands following the advice of the psalmist: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).



ERNEST J. SUMERLIN

When Tom Isaac returned to New Orleans after having worked at the church of Christ exhibit at the World Fair in New York, he introduced me to Ernest J. Sumerlin so I could continue studying with him. Sumerlin preached at a small English-speaking congregation in New York.

I liked Sumerlin even less than I liked Isaac. He was a man of little culture, as happens with preachers who don't place much importance on secular subjects because they can't or because they are lazy men who don't like to study. Sumerlin said that the only important thing was the Bible, and anything else was of the world.

I asked him one day why he didn't read books, and he said he only read the Bible; he wasn't interested in the literature of men. The poor man didn't know that almost all universal literature has come from the Bible. In the book *The Christian System* that Art Haddox gave to me on October 4, 1972—of which I immediately read all 312 pages—Alexander Campbell says, "The Bible is to the intellectual and moral world of man what the sun is to the planets in our system, the fountain and the source of light and life, spiritual and eternal. There is not a spiritual idea in the whole human race that is not drawn from the Bible. As soon will the philosopher find an independent sunbeam in nature, as the theologian a spiritual conception in man, independent of the One Best Book."

I completely agree with Alexander Campbell.

Without the Bible, Italian humanist Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) wouldn't have written his famous work on the penitential Psalms.

Without the Bible, English poet John Milton (1608-1674) wouldn't have written his famous *Paradise Lost*.

Without the Bible, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) wouldn't have written his *Divine Comedy*.

Without the Bible, George Washington (1723-1799) wouldn't have had such an important role in the writing of the Declaration of Independence of the United States, which was continued by Thomas Jefferson.

Without the Bible, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) wouldn't have written his famous Peoria speech opposing slavery.

Without the Bible, Eugene O'Neill wouldn't have written *Anna Christie*, Sinclair Lewis wouldn't have written *Elmer Gantry*, Pearl Buck wouldn't have written her enjoyable books on China, or William Faulkner his *Sanctuary*, Ernest Hemingway his *The Old Man and the Sea*, and T. S. Eliot his *Ash Wednesday*. I could fill five hundred pages with names of authors whose best works have been inspired by the Bible.

Alexander Campbell and other great men who initiated the Restoration Movement in the United States understood this very well. Unfortunately, these men are largely forgotten today.

I couldn't speak with Sumerlin about these topics. He only knew about the Bible, and not that much about it, either.

I left Abilene to go to Morocco—where I lived then—on the first day of December of 1964. The elders of Highland weren't completely satisfied with what we talked about. They sent Sumerlin with me so that he could report to them about my house, my family, and the church in Tangier.

The first Sunday Sumerlin spent in Tangier, he was surprised to see a church of two hundred people worshipping the Lord. He ate at my house with me, my wife, my mother-in-law, and our three daughters. He told the Highland elders about all this in his first report. He asked me to read it. One of the paragraphs read: "Juan lives a good life, he even has a piano in his house." It was true. My

oldest daughter, Yolanda, who was eight years old at the time, was taking piano lessons. A private instructor came to our house three times a week.

Sumerlin returned to Abilene. In the spring of 1965, I left Morocco and moved to Spain. At first, I went to Madrid by myself; I had to look for a house. My family arrived in July when the girls finished the school year.

My wife, who had had both French and Spanish education like me, had been working as a secretary for the director of the State Bank in Morocco for several years. When she left, she was compensated with a significant amount of money. With this money and some other that I had saved from the sale of the printing press, I was able to buy two apartments in Madrid. I didn't pay cash; I gave a down payment and then paid a set amount of money each month. My mother, my mother-in-law, and three daughters—Yolanda, Loida, and Monica—settled in the bigger apartment on Pintor Ribera Street. Our fourth daughter, Zoraida, was born in Madrid.

In the other apartment, close to the first one on López de Hoyos Street, I set up my office, where I wrote, recorded radio programs, and planned evangelistic efforts, among other things. I was in the office from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m., and from 5 p.m. until 10 p.m.

Sumerlin arrived in Spain in June of 1965. Highland had sent him to help me, or watch me—I never really knew. I rented an apartment for him on General Mola Street and he settled there. He asked me to hire a housekeeper for him, and I did.

He never learned Spanish; first, because he wasn't interested in languages, and second, because he was too old to learn another language. What did he do? I don't know. I only saw him on Sundays in the worship. He couldn't help me and I didn't want him in my way, either. I couldn't devote much attention to him.

One and a half years later, the elders of the Highland church wrote me a letter asking me to tell them about the work that Sumerlin was doing in Madrid, since they were sending him a significant monthly check. I told them that I did not speak about a partner. If they wanted to know what Sumerlin did, they could come to Spain and ask him themselves.

Ernest Sumerlin was a good man but he was not a good missionary or preacher. He didn't have the gift. He was in Spain because he had "discovered" me at the World Fair in New York. He didn't help me but wasn't causing any problems, either.

The Highland elders got the message in my letter. They sent two deacons to Madrid to meet with Sumerlin: Bob Bailey and Jack McGlothlin. Bob had a construction business, and Jack was in the oil business. Both were very intelligent men used to dealing with many important people.

One night, all four of us went out to dinner. Sumerlin called the waiter and said: "Salada grande, por favor."

Jack looked at him, then at me. Without any mercy, he said to him: "E. J., you have been in Spain for a year and a half and all you know how to say is 'salada grande'? I can say that, too, and I've only been here for two days."

McGlothlin was a little cruel to Sumerlin. But it was the truth.

When the deacons returned to Abilene, they told the elders about their impressions of Sumerlin. The elders wrote to him saying that they would support him for only two more months. After that, he had to find a job or return to the United States.

I saw him very little after that. Once in a while I would call him on the phone, and we ate together a couple more times. He wasn't sad or worried. I later learned that he and his wife had divorced, and he remarried. His second wife was a young woman from England whom he met in Madrid and took back to the United States. Except for a couple of letters that I received from him, I never heard from him again.

I will say this again: Sumerlin was a good man. If he failed as a missionary, it wasn't his fault completely. He was placed in a ministry to which he hadn't been called and for which he didn't have the gift. People have to do the work for which they have competence and which makes them happy; otherwise they can't function well. This principle doesn't only apply to preachers and missionaries but to any other activity in society.

31

THREE ATTACKS FROM THE DEVIL

This century's evil is that many people don't believe in the devil.

The devil is introduced in the third chapter of Genesis with these words: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made" (Genesis 3:1). And three chapters before the end of the Bible, we read: "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur" (Revelation 20:10).

Between Genesis and Revelation, the Word of God sketches a biography of the devil, defines his power, and tells of his influence in the lives of human beings. Sometimes he "masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). At other times, he threatens us like a roaring lion (1 Peter 4:8).

Old movies like "The Exorcist" and "Rosemary's Baby" spread an image of the devil among movie screens around the world. People don't believe in him, but the devil is as real as God. God is all powerful, but the devil is powerful.

When the devil knew that the Son of man came to destroy his works (1 John 3:8) and redeem the world from its wickedness (Titus 2:14), he tried to keep this from happening. Right at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus suffered

three strong attacks from the devil. Satan knew what he was doing; he couldn't wait, he had to defeat Christ before he started his work of redemption.

God forbid that I should compare myself to Christ! He is divine and I'm human. He is the Creator of the universe and I'm one of his creatures. But the devil also tried to kill me at the beginning of my ministry. As in the case of Christ, he tried three times. He knew the mission that the Father had given me; he knew that I was about to start evangelizing in several countries and that many souls would be snatched off his claws. He made an attempt on my life three times.

The first time was in May of 1964, one week before my first trip to New York. My wife and I had decided to go to the beach one Thursday. We chose a beach in Tangier called Grutas de Hércules. The waters were dangerous; several people had drowned there. We agreed to swim close to the shore without going too far into the sea.

This may seem incomprehensible, but it's real. I was born across from the ocean. I was raised and lived across from the ocean until I was thirty-five years old. But I never learned how to swim. I wasn't interested. My wife was a very good swimmer. That day she was sunbathing on the sand and reading. I went into the ocean. I don't know how it happened, but I went too far. When I realized that I couldn't touch the bottom of the sea, I got scared. The current was carrying me out to sea. I began to scream asking for help and waving my arms. My wife couldn't see me or hear me. When I was about to drown, a strong wave pushed me to where I could feel the ground underneath. I was dizzy but I could walk to shore. When I got to where my wife was, I started throwing up all the water I had swallowed and I lay down on the sand. She was very scared, and as soon as I pulled myself together, we got dressed and went home.

The devil knew that one month later I would come in contact with the church of Christ and start the Restoration Movement in Spain. He wanted to keep me from doing that, but he couldn't.

The second attack was in San Antonio, Texas. Summerlin and I had made a stop in Boston and in San Antonio—where his father lived—on our way to

Abilene from New York. There a new attack from the devil again put my life at risk.

I had never ridden a horse. One morning, I saw Sumerlin's father, an older man, arrive at the house riding very smoothly on his horse. I asked if I could go for a ride, and he said yes. As soon as I got on the horse, it started galloping fast, just like the horses I had seen in Western movies. It started racing on the road. Cars were coming from the opposite side, but the horse would gallop in their midst. I was screaming, asking for help, holding tight to the horse's neck. It then left the road and went into a forest running among the trees. I continued yelling but nobody could hear me. I thought that I was going to crash my head against the trees at any moment. I gave thanks to God when the horse stopped in front of a house. Sumerlin's father later explained to me that one of his daughters lived there and he went to visit her every day. The horse knew the way, but it didn't know me. That's why it had started on a frantic race.

I got down from the horse, and with it by my side I started back to the ranch. I found Sumerlin and his father on the road. I explained what had happened. Sumerlin's father said that God had watched over me. The horse didn't throw me off because I was holding tight to its neck the whole time. If I had tried to hold the bridles, not knowing how to do it, the horse would have thrown me down onto the road at the first pull, and my life would probably have been over.

For a second time, the devil had been defeated and Christ had been victorious.

There was a third time. It was in September of 1965. I lived in Madrid. I had a big Opel car that I had bought in Morocco. Two friends came to visit me in Madrid: Tom Isaacs, whom I had met at the World Fair in New York, and Richard Treat, a young man who was a student at Abilene Christian University. Tom wanted to visit Toledo, a monumental city situated about forty-three miles south of Madrid. The Romans conquered this city in 192 A.D. and surrounded it with walls. King Charles V made it the capital of his empire in the sixteenth century. Toledo was, and still is, known as the city of three cultures because in centuries past Jews, Muslims, and Catholics cohabited there in harmony. Even

to this day, there is an old Jewish synagogue, a Muslim mosque, and many Catholic churches. The most famous of these is the cathedral, whose construction was begun in the thirteenth century. It contains important paintings by el Greco, an artist who was born on the island of Crete in 1541 and died in Toledo in 1614. The city of Toledo, in the state of Ohio, was named after this city.

Our car was on its way to Toledo at 75 miles per hour. In front of us, a truck going the same speed. When I was about twenty-five feet from the truck, it slowed down drastically. I could see very quickly that we were going to crash against it. My reflexes saved us. I swerved to the right and got the car out of the road. There was a small embankment and I thought the car was going to turn over. It was better to roll over away from the road than to crash against the truck, which would have meant a sure death. I got my foot off the brake and I held on to the steering wheel. The car turned over several times and stopped without any problem. Treat's face was very pale. Tom was calling his wife, saying her name repeatedly: "Helen, Helen, Helen . . ." But Helen couldn't hear him.

I went up to the road and spoke with the man who was driving the truck, which was now stopped. He said to me, "You are a good driver; you escaped a certain death."

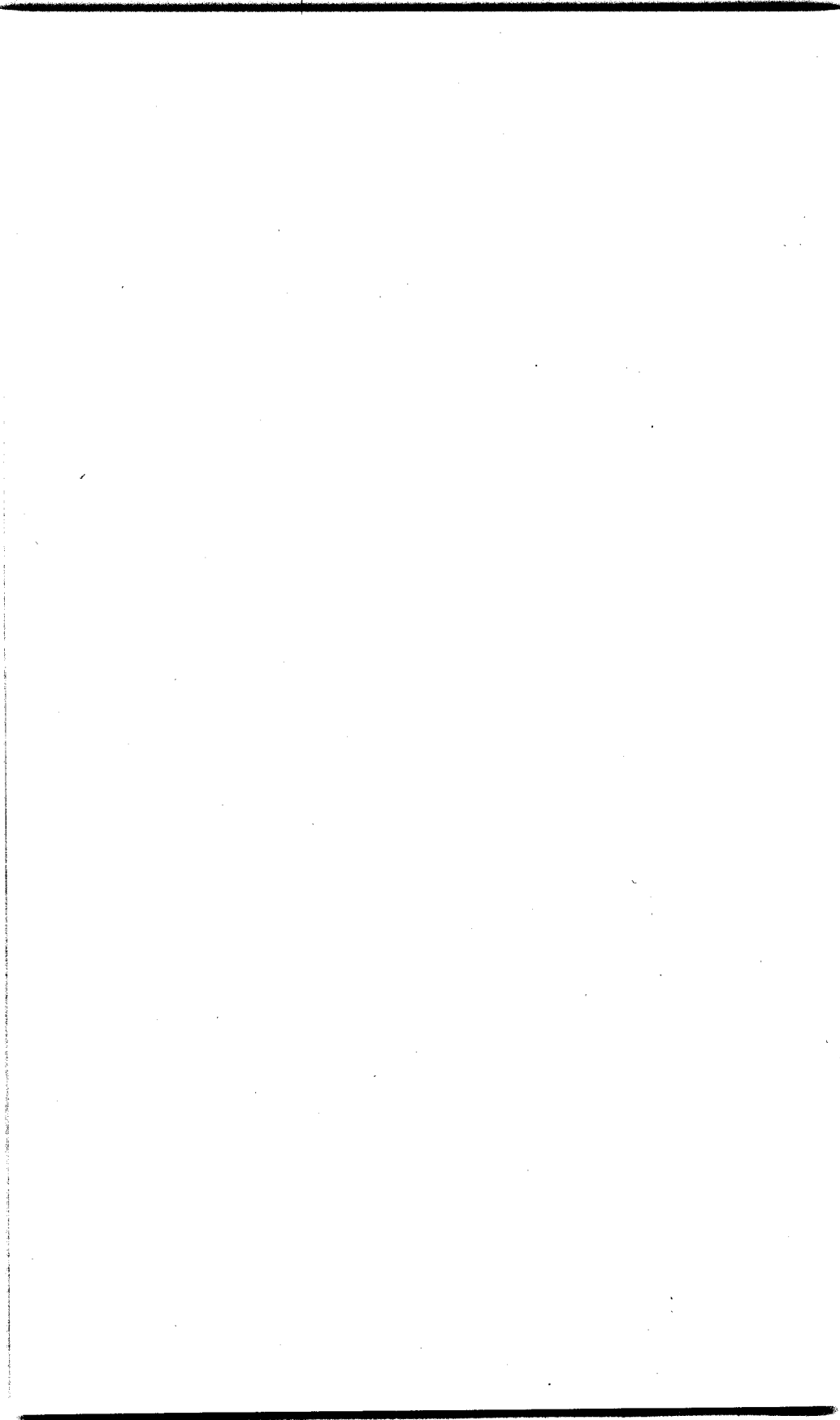
"Why did you stop so abruptly?" I asked.

"Look at that crossroads," he answered. "A small car coming the other way crossed without signaling and without respecting the stop sign. I couldn't run over him. I knew you were behind me, but I only had two choices: stepping on the brakes as I did, or running the small car over and destroying it. I chose to brake, hoping that you too would be able to do that. Thank God you did it very well and got out of the road with one maneuver of the steering wheel."

Yes, thank God and too bad for the devil. He knew that Juan Antonio Monroy was in that car, the man who would give him a lot of trouble in years to come.

I got the car back on the road, and we kept driving toward Toledo. We visited that city as we had planned.

It was clear that I was making the devil restless. He tried to kill me three times within a few months. Seemingly, the devil had not read Psalm 91:3, where God promises to free me from the fowler's snare. That evil soul hunter had missed his target when he shot his rifle.



ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH IN MADRID

There I was, in the capital of Spain, in the summer of 1965. I left everything in order in Morocco and I set out to begin a new missionary work in the country that sent Christopher Columbus to discover the so-called New World, although it had already been discovered.

I asked myself where I should start. Back then, Spain was a country under the rule of a dictator. General Francisco Franco headed an uprising against the constitutional government on July 18, 1936, and initiated a civil war that lasted three years. That was a military uprising that was supported by the Catholic Church. The war ended on April 1, 1939. One million people died, both civilians and military. Spain became a dictatorship ruled by the military, the Catholic bishops and cardinals, and the Pope from Rome. The regime lasted thirty-six years until Franco's death in November of 1976.

As I have mentioned at the beginning of this book, there was in Spain a suffocating religious intolerance imposed by the Catholic Church and supported by the dictatorship. Catholics enjoyed all the privileges while members of other religions like the different evangelical communities were persecuted, fined, and incarcerated.

In 1962, the University Church of Christ in Abilene sent Leonard H. Miller to Spain, a professor of Spanish at Abilene Christian University. He was a good man. He spoke, read, and wrote Spanish correctly. He was in Spain for a month and had contact with some of the Plymouth Brethren groups, but he went back to Texas saying that it was difficult to establish a church of Christ here in Spain.

In April of 1967, I was invited to preach twice at the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures, which back then were held in Los Angeles. A few months before, I had read a report about the church of Christ in Europe written by a professor whose name was Carmichael. After presenting some statistics about various European countries, he said, "Spain is completely closed to the gospel."

When I preached to three thousand people, I referred to this report; I quoted the complete name of the author—which I cannot recall at the moment—and I said: "Spain was not closed to the Gospel. The heart and the vision of the church in the United States was closed."

When I finished speaking, a man about thirty or thirty-five years old came immediately to me and said, "I am Carmichael and I have listened to you attentively. I'm glad to know that Christ is being introduced in Spain."

We became very good friends.

One month after I arrived in Madrid, my wife came to see the apartments I had bought. Sumerlin was there as well. The three of us plus a young woman who worked for Sumerlin made four of us who could start the church. In fact, we were already the church. We met on the second Sunday of August of 1965 in the apartment where Sumerlin lived, and we celebrated our first worship service: hymns, prayers, preaching of the Word, the Lord's Supper, and the offering.

That year, three families were converted. My three daughters were already in Madrid. We were growing. Sumerlin's apartment was small, so we agreed to meet in the house of one of the recent converts in a neighborhood called Carabanchel. We kept working, and visitors were coming. In January of 1966, Mercedes Zardaín was baptized. I wrote a little about her in Chapter 24, and I will write more in the next chapter.

There were about twenty Christians now and the apartment was getting too small.

In September of 1966, we bought a facility from the British Bible Society at a very low price. This place was in downtown Madrid, at 2 Flor Alta Street. We set up a bookstore that we called *Librería Cristiana* (Christian Bookstore). It was open for twenty-six years; we later had to sell it in 1992 due to some financial problems.

The ground floor of this facility, which was not very big, was set up for worship. We bought chairs and we made a pulpit. It could accommodate about forty people. Other people were baptized there; among them was a leader of the Jehovah's Witnesses whose name was Diego Teruel, his girlfriend Gloria Garía-Fraile, and my oldest daughter, Yolanda, who was ten years old then. I thought she was too young to be baptized, but she said very firmly: "Dad, if you don't baptize me, I will find another man to do it."

I did baptize her.

The church kept growing. I wrote to the elders of the Highland Church to say that we needed a bigger meeting place. Again they sent Bob Bailey and another deacon who also knew of construction work, Frank White. He had built some houses in Belgium. We spent two weeks going around Madrid in search of a place. We found one relatively close to downtown on 25 Teruel Street, where the church still meets today. We gave a small amount of money as a down payment and we made monthly payments over the next eight years until it was completely paid for. Some repairs were necessary. One month before the inauguration, some women of the church worked with dedication to wipe paint off the walls and scrub the floor tiles, which were also covered with paint. They also made curtains and fixed the pews, the pulpit, and some closets. They were very excited about the new house of the Lord. We all were.

In those days, H. C. Zachary and Glenn Owen came to Madrid. They were coming back from a trip to Africa and their wives were waiting for them in Portugal. Zachary was a member of the Highland Church and a very famous artist in Abilene. His specialty was paintings of the American West. In two afternoons, he painted a beautiful scene on the wall of the baptistery behind

the pulpit. The scenery was a river with small rocks in the water, trees on the sides, and a mountain in the background. That painting is still there.

We decided to hold the dedication of the new building on June 8, 1968. It looked very nice with the capacity to seat 160 people, two classrooms for children's classes, and a bathroom, among others.

We were concerned about the reaction of the Catholic Church. In June of 1967, the Spanish government enacted a law that authorized the opening of places dedicated to non-Catholic worship. A Baptist lawyer, José Cardona, and I assisted the government in the writing of that law. In the year following the law, none of the evangelical denominations had dared open a place for their services. We were the first ones, but the Spanish people were not ready for religious freedom just yet.

Our meeting place was on the ground floor of a four-story building where Catholic families lived, some of whom were quite fanatic. On the front we put a sign with big white and black letters that read: "*Iglesia de Cristo*." One of the neighbors told me that the white letters made the sign look like a disco and that I should write them in black. Another asked me to write *Iglesia de Cristo* and *Virgen María*. I didn't listen to either one.

Anticipating that some young Catholics might be sent by the priests to come into the building and interrupt the dedication, I called the undersecretary of justice, Alfredo López, two days before. I had spoken with him before several times when we were working on the religious-freedom law. He put me at ease. The day of the dedication, he sent two police officers dressed as civilians to be present at the event.

It was a glorious day. It was the first non-Catholic building open in Spain under the protection of the new law. Radio stations and newspapers were spreading the news. The important U.S. *Times Magazine* sent a reporter and a photographer to do an interview. A TV station from the Netherlands sent a team of reporters to record the ceremony. It was quite a happening. Spain was opening up to religious freedom. The church of Christ was the star of this new stage. The *Restauración* magazine published an extensive article. It included part of my speech that day: "We are not some Gospel adventurers. We know

where we come from, what we want, what our objective is here, and—most important—we are certain we have a purpose and a final goal. We will go forward toward it and won't let anyone get in the way."

The next day, Sunday, two young women were baptized. One lives in the United States and the other in northern Spain. According to the registry of members we have in the church office, four hundred people have been baptized in that building. Some have passed away, others live outside of Madrid. Some abandoned the faith. But the building has been full every Sunday, down to the present day. It is written: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged . . . The Lord is with me like a mighty warrior" (Joshua 1:9; Jeremiah 20:11)

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ALL OVER SPAIN

In November of 1964, when the elders of the Highland Church said that beginning the following year I would be working under their supervision, they gave me a mission: to establish a strong congregation in the capital of Spain.

Nothing else.

That's all they asked for. That's what they commissioned me to do.

But God had given me more responsibility that demanded much dedication and work: the Great Commission.

I interpreted the text in Acts 1:8 according to the evangelistic fire that burned in my heart since the day of my baptism. To me, Jerusalem was Madrid; Judea and Samaria were the rest of Spain. Then it would be the rest of the world, as far as I could go.

Paul was my example.

It was very clear to me that a Christian leader can't reduce his spiritual ministry and spend his life taking care of one congregation or going from one to another to justify his monthly check.

No. This may be the profile of a mediocre preacher who is happy spending his years seeing the same faces. But it's not the profile of a Christian leader who sets his eyes beyond the local social circle.

The Gospel of John begins with a prologue that is a call to communicate the Christian faith. The Word became flesh to illuminate the world, not just one small corner of the earth. And that light cannot be kept in a small lamp to light only one room. It's called to pierce through other darkness.

I had this very clear in my mind. I still do. For the elders, the mission was a congregation in Madrid. My vision was broader.

When the church building in Madrid filled up every Sunday, what could we do? We couldn't buy a bigger one, and we couldn't build. Then, supported by the elders and deacons that the church in Madrid already had and by many of its members, I made the decision to expand to other areas of the capital. That's how in a few years we started three other congregations in towns near Madrid: Alcorcón, Parla, and Fuenlabrada. We tried in another two, Alcalá de Henares and Coslada, but our work didn't yield fruit there.

The Restoration Movement was expanding. In 1980, a Catholic priest named Julián Hernando published a book about all the evangelical denominations that were doing work in Spain. He included us there. In that book, he said: "The fastest growing religious movement in Spain is the church of Christ." This wasn't written by a friend of ours, but by an enemy. But he was acknowledging the reality.

Little by little, we expanded to other cities in the country until the number of congregations grew to twenty-seven.

I had my own way of working. First, I tried to gather a group of interested people, even if the group was small. These people were contacted through the magazine that I was publishing then, *Restauración*, and through the radio program Herald of Truth, which was vital in the establishment of the churches in Spain. In the following chapters, I will speak about Herald of Truth.

As soon as I had a group of interested people, I would visit them and have evangelistic meetings. When some of them were baptized, I found a facility to rent. Then I looked for one of the most capable Christians and proposed that he move to the chosen city to work as a preacher. When I had all this taken care of, I had to work on the financial aspect: finding a salary for those preachers, some of whom had families. I would write letters to the United States or travel

and visit congregations in person. I would meet with the elders and ask them to support a preacher.

I want to acknowledge and thank the churches that during those years helped us by providing salaries for the preachers. These churches, besides the Highland Church, were the following: Turnpike in Grand Prairie, Texas; Hartford in Ponca City, Oklahoma; and Doran's Cove in Bridgeport, Alabama. Some of these churches supported several preachers. Some of them supported only one. The West End Church in Nashville, Tennessee, helped to publish *Restauración* magazine for several years. One of the elders in this congregation, Jack Sinclair, was very fond of Spain and used to come frequently. When he passed away, his wife, Sue, provided help for several years for an assistance center for drug addicts that we have in Parla, near Madrid.

For the last seven or eight years, the churches in Spain have not received any financial help whatsoever from the United States. They are completely independent. They pay their preachers and they take on all the expenses that any normal congregation has. One church in Gilmer, Texas, started sending 300 dollars a month to Madrid in 2006 to contribute to evangelistic projects in Latin America.

My work has been gigantic in past years. I had to work in two different directions: establishing congregations in Spain and training preachers. I sought assistance in the United States to help support them. But I believe we have set an example to other countries where churches have never become independent of the financial help that they receive from the United States.

When Paul wrote to the churches in Colosse, he encouraged the members to be grateful (Colossians 3:15). My parents taught me to be grateful ever since I was very young. Gratitude has always been a part of my personality. I never forget the good things I have received. My gratitude toward the people and churches in the United States who have helped me financially for the great evangelistic work for which God commissioned me is twofold: a profound feeling in my heart and this expression of public recognition. Without the help from those churches in Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Alabama, I couldn't have done the work that God has allowed me to do. I am happy I haven't let

down those who trusted me. Today, we have a solid Restoration Movement in Spain with good prospect for the future, and these congregations have had an important role in that work

I have always been a hard worker. A preacher from the United States named Lovelady, whom I knew and invited to an evangelistic campaign in Spain, said to me, "If instead of preaching the gospel you had devoted your efforts to business, you would have founded twenty-seven companies instead of twenty-seven congregations in Spain." Maybe so, but I wouldn't have rescued any souls from hell.

In Romans 15, Paul twice expressed his desire to go to Spain (Romans 15:24, 28). Historians who study Christianity believe that Paul never realized his desire. But I did go. I don't know if Paul would have done in the first century the work that God allowed me to do in Spain between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

I believe this is the time to write about Mercedes Zardaín.

God chose Moses and Paul for two important works. We always talk about the work they did in their own times. But these men didn't work alone. God doesn't choose teams, he chooses individuals. Those who are chosen have the task of forming teams. We know more about Moses than about Paul, but both had good collaborators.

In our churches, we talk about Thomas and Alexander Campbell, about Barton Stone and John Smith and other giants of the faith. But what about all the others who contributed to introduce the Restoration Movement in the United States? What do we know about them? Who were they and where can we find information about them? We only have brief references in some book.

Mercedes Zardain has been very important in the Restoration Movement in Spain. It's only fair to recognize her work.

Mercedes was born in Madrid on October 2, 1937. She attended high school and the *Escuela Oficial de Idiomas* (Official School of Languages), where she learned English, which she can write and speak perfectly. The whole family—her father, mother, and sister—were members of the Episcopal Church in Madrid. When Mercedes was seventeen years old, she moved to

Tangier, Morocco, where there was a Bible school for women. She attended the school and graduated with outstanding grades after three years.

Back in Madrid, she started working as a secretary for the Episcopal bishop in Spain. Later on, she had a more important position. In a town called Torrejón, about twelve miles north of Madrid, the United States had a very important air base, which was negotiated by President Eisenhower and General Franco. Mercedes got a high-paying job as secretary to the colonel of the base.

I knew Mercedes from Tangier. When I started the meetings of the church in Sumerlin's apartment, I invited her and she started coming on Sundays. That year, some leaders from Highland came to visit including brother Blodget and Bob Bailey, a deacon, whom we knew from previous visits.

Blodget and Bailey spoke extensively with Mercedes and explained to her the significant differences between the Episcopal Church and the church of the New Testament. Mercedes was baptized on January 23, 1966. Later on, her parents and sisters were baptized as well.

Another elder named Art Haddox came to Madrid months later. He proposed that Mercedes work for the Highland Church as a full-time missionary. Mercedes had studied and prepared herself for such work. She accepted and resigned her important job at the air base. She dedicated herself in body and in spirit to the service of the church of Christ. At the base, Mercedes had a salary that was twice as high as the salary that Highland paid her. But she was thrilled to be working in God's church.

Throughout the years, Mercedes has been indispensable in the development of the church of Christ in Spain. Every time we opened a new facility for worship, a lot of paperwork and documentation was necessary in Madrid. Mercedes would take care of all that, and she also helped the preachers with their legal problems. She is very respected and loved in Spain. Two years ago she was honored by the preachers and presented with a plaque.

Mercedes was in charge of the Christian bookstore all twenty-six years that we operated it. She has worked—and continues to work—in the church in Madrid without counting the hours. She helps everyone and is on top of

things. She is an example of all that a woman can do in the church without desiring positions, without wanting to be the center of attention.

Her husband passed away three years ago of a heart attack. She now lives with her sister, her daughter, and her ninety-six-year-old mother, who at the time of this writing is very ill.

Paul says we should respect those who work in the Lord and honor them (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Romans 13:7). That's what I have sought to do here in a few brief paragraphs, although Mercedes' work would be deserving of an entire book.

SWITZERLAND, PORTUGAL, AND GUINEA

In his famous novel *Where the Boys Are*, Glenden Swarthout says that neither the young nor the adults are to be content with their successes in life. They should always aspire for more. Like the train that leaves the station on a long journey and doesn't stop until it reaches its destination. "Work," said Benjamin Franklin, "and when you have achieved what you set out to achieve, keep working."

This has always been my motto. I had been able to establish churches in Spain, but neither my goals nor my aspirations ended there. I was always on the lookout for new opportunities to plant churches in other places. And God would open up the path for me.

Between 1950 and 1960, many Spaniards went to other European countries looking for work, mainly to Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In 1963, I came in contact with a small group of Spaniards who were meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. Among them was Valeriano Lanaspá. I continued visiting them and preaching for four years. They borrowed a facility owned by the Plymouth Brethren. In May of 1967, I celebrated an important meeting with all those who had been baptized. I explained the

doctrinal principles of the church of Christ, and they all accepted them. They rented a place downtown, which was inaugurated on September 28 of 1968. Valeriano Lanaspá quit his secular job and devoted himself to serving the congregation full time. That's how the Hispanic church of Christ was established in Geneva, Switzerland.

In a small town called Praia das Maças in Portugal, there was a man who worked in a restaurant and listened to our Herald of Truth radio program from Monday to Friday. His name was Avelino, and he enjoyed the topics that I talked about. He wrote us several times, so we invited him to come to Madrid and he spent several days there with us. He left a happy man. He came back a second time and said he had studied our doctrine and wanted to become a member of the church of Christ. He did so and started a small congregation in Praia das Maças. He then moved to Oporto, a large Portuguese city by the Duero River.

From Madrid, we sent him the addresses of many people who listened to our Herald of Truth radio programs and wrote to us. Avelino set out to visit them and soon was able to start a congregation with the support of the church in Madrid. The next step was looking for a meeting place. We found it and inaugurated it in January of 1973. I was there for the occasion. The congregation grew. Another Portuguese family was contacted through the radio program, the family of Adelino Silva. Adelino was a man with extensive secular education. He was baptized in January of 1973. I have never seen any other man who assimilated the doctrine of the church of Christ so quickly and so deeply. He was very fond of the men who initiated the Restoration Movement in the United States.

In October of 1974, a married couple arrived in Oporto: María Teresa, who was from Spain, and Luis "Lou" Seckler, originally from Brazil. He was then working with Herald of Truth in Abilene and continued working there for many years. The Secklers were in Oporto for two years. This time was a great boost for the church.

Avelino Farias moved from Oporto to Lisbon. Lou Seckler and Adelino Silva worked together in the congregation. They left the first facility and rented

a larger one, which was inaugurated in June of 1975. When the Seckler family returned to the United States, after having been in Portugal for only two years, Adelino Silva stayed there in charge of the congregation, supported financially by a church in Alabama that Seckler had contacted.

Adelino is intimately linked to the Restoration Movement in Spain. He and his wife have two children and do a great job in the congregation in Oporto.

Following Geneva in Switzerland and Oporto in Portugal, the next place was a country farther away: Spanish-speaking Equatorial Guinea in Africa, between Cameroon and Gabon, on the Atlantic Ocean coast.

This small country, currently very rich in oil, was conquered by Portuguese sailors in the fifteenth century. Portugal surrendered it to Spain in 1778. In exchange, Spain gave Portugal the colony of Sacramento in Brazil, which had been under Spanish dominion.

I'll be honest and say that Spain never did pay much attention to this piece of Africa so far away from the Iberian Peninsula. Nevertheless, facing the independence movements that were taking place in the country, the Spanish government proclaimed Guinea as a province of Spain in 1960. Four years later, under the pressure of the United Nations, Spain granted Guinea a statute of autonomy. Finally, on October 12, 1968, the colony gained its independence and adopted the name of Equatorial Guinea. The new nation's first president was a dictator, Francisco Macías. Another dictator, Todoro Obiam Nguema, related to Macías, overthrew the government in a coup d'état in 1979 and established himself as president. Since then he's been a strong dictator, treating the country as if it were his own ranch.

I had contacted a group of Christians who were there by themselves and wanted me to visit them, but the Spanish authorities would not give me a visa. Eight days after the independence, I got on a plane and flew to Guinea. The Spanish government didn't rule there anymore, and the new African authorities were not an obstacle for me to enter the new independent country.

I was in Guinea for fifteen days. I met with the brethren every day. I had an interview with the minister of the interior, Ángel Ntutumú, and I said to him that I wanted the church of Christ to be recognized in Guinea. I added that we

would soon rent a building and I would give him the address. The minister was extremely nice with me. I still keep a photograph of me next to him, which was taken in his office with a Polaroid that I was carrying. He said he would legally recognize the church of Christ as soon as I presented all the required documentation. During the time I was in his office, he admitted they were very tired of the Catholic Church's meddling in the politics of the country and wanted other forms of Christianity in Guinea.

Over the phone, I contacted an American missionary who worked in the neighboring country of Cameroon. I told him about the possibilities we had in Guinea and he came right away. Accompanied by local brethren, we traveled around the capital, Fernando Po, and rented a building at a good price that was move-in ready. We bought chairs, made a pulpit, and started our meetings. The American brother, whose name I do not recall—I never wrote it anywhere—said he would visit the church in Guinea once a month. He did this for two years, and then he returned to the United States.

The local members continued the work. I receive two or three letters from them each year asking me to return to Guinea to help. I haven't been able to do it. Latin America takes a lot of my time and I can't multiply myself. One of these days, I will get on a plane and go help these brethren. I will probably find the children of those whom I met in my first trip. Who knows?

LATIN AMERICA

There are nineteen countries on the American continent with inhabitants whose first language is Spanish. They were under Spanish rule from the end of the fifteenth century until the nineteenth century when they started to become independent from the *Madre Patria* (Mother Land), as Spain is called there. The first country to gain its independence was Columbia in 1810. The last one was Cuba in 1898.

In the second half of the twentieth century, when I was in the height of my evangelistic fever, the population of all these countries together added up to three hundred million. Quite a challenge for me! Back then, Spain had thirty million inhabitants who needed to hear the gospel. On the other side of the ocean, there were three hundred million who spoke my same language.

I had preached the gospel in my Jerusalem, my Judea, my Samaria, and now I wanted to go to the ends of the earth.

The story of Juan Antonio Monroy began to be known in those countries. I received invitations to preach in evangelistic campaigns across practically the whole continent. Out of nineteen Latin American republics, I have preached in sixteen. I have been called from Chile, Bolivia, and Paraguay but have never been able to go there.

In some countries, I have only visited once: Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Panamá, Santo Domingo, and Uruguay. I've been in Nicaragua four times, three times in Honduras, three times in Guatemala, seven times in Colombia, mainly in Medellín, three times in Ecuador, three times in Perú, and three times in Argentina and Venezuela. I preached several campaigns in El Salvador, six or seven, both in the capital and in other cities like San Miguel. In San Miguel, I baptized fifteen people at the end of a sermon. The Hispanic country in which I have traveled most extensively with an open Bible has been Mexico. I have preached in about fifteen cities of this great neighbor of the United States. For five years in a row, I traveled to Tijuana, on the border across from San Diego, the week of Easter. Each year, I would baptize between twelve and sixteen people.

One summer, I toured some cities in the country. Humberto Rivas was with me, who back then worked for Herald of Truth in the Aztec country with his wife, Leticia. Six months before this trip, he had organized activities in churches and community centers in five cities: Matamoros, Saltillo, Monterey, Guadalajara, and Torreón in the state of Coahuila, in the north of the country. In Torreón, I was called again another year to preach at a youth conference that lasted three days in the month of July. There were about eight hundred in attendance from all over the country. We had baptisms every night. The last night—as I recorded it in my notebook—fifty-three young people were baptized. I asked other preachers from the city to help me with the baptisms.

In Tijuana, I had an experience that I would like to share. I was standing at the pulpit and preaching one Sunday. There were about four hundred people in the building. I saw a *charro* coming in: an authentic Mexican man wearing golden boots with spurs, tight pants, a *chamarra* jacket, a hat like the Mariachis wear, and two guns hanging from his belt. He started walking down the hallways looking at the people. The Lord helped me to stay calm. I interrupted the sermon and said: "When you are done going around the *ruedo* (*ruedo* is a bullring), let me continue preaching."

He looked up and said to me: "I don't have anything against you; go on with your preaching."

Several men of the congregation asked him to leave the building; he was drunk and had been searching for his *compadre* (friend) to kill him. He knew where to find him—the friend was a member of the church. Fortunately, the *compadre* wasn't at church that day. Had he seen him there, he probably would have taken his gun out and only God knows what would have happened.

I have always believed that, according to the New Testament, the church on earth has three missions: to announce the gospel, to stimulate the spiritual growth of the converts, and to take care of the material needs of the poor and the needy. I have tried to carry out the latter, benevolence work, according to my capabilities both in Spain and in other countries.

I have made many trips to Latin America to help when there have been natural disasters. My first material contribution was in 1972, when there was an earthquake in Managua, Nicaragua, which left 18,000 people dead, 50,000 people injured, and a city almost completely destroyed. I contacted the preacher of the church there and I flew to Managua. I gave him a sum of money that I had raised among the Christians in Spain and I assisted the afflicted brethren spiritually.

Since then, I have practiced the ministry of benevolence every time I've had the chance. I went to El Salvador after two earthquakes to help the people who had been affected. I did the same when they had flooding in Venezuela that left some of our brothers homeless and broke. I also went to Chiapas, Mexico, after another natural disaster. I rented two trucks and filled them with bags of groceries. Assisted by members of the church there, especially young members, we went around towns and villages distributing bags to the native population.

In October of 2009, Hurricane Mitch devastated large areas of Central America: El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala. With the help of readers of the *Restauración* magazine and members of the church in Spain, I was able to raise 20,000 dollars. I took the money to the brethren who had been affected by the disaster. I met with preachers from the four countries and gave 5,000 to each. On these trips, I limit myself to taking offerings, and I preach the word of God at the same time. I preached every day. In El Salvador, I preached five times, as well as in Honduras, where I also taught a workshop for students

from the Baxter Institute. In Guatemala, I spoke five times: three in evening meetings, one to leaders of the churches, and one to the youth. We had sixty-nine baptisms in total: thirty-six in El Salvador, seventeen in Nicaragua, five in Honduras, and eleven in Guatemala.

From Latin America, I went to southwest Asia. In December of 2004, an intense tsunami devastated the coastal areas of various countries in Asia: Thailand, Indonesia, Malasia, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and others. The tsunami left 3,000 people dead, half a million injured, and five million survivors in extreme poverty. Again, I was able to raise some funds in Spain and I went to Sri Lanka to offer the help that I had available. I followed my habitual method.

Whenever it's possible, I prefer to hand the financial help directly to the people in need. I was able to find volunteers in the city. We went to large stores and bought essential groceries, blankets, and school supplies for children, among other things. We packed bags, rented trucks, and went around towns both near and far to distribute the bags according to the needs. In Colombo, the capital, I came in contact with an orphanage for young girls. There were forty girls between six and ten years old whose parents had died in the tsunami. They slept on blankets on the floor. I had run out of money, so I used my personal Visa credit card and bought forty mattresses and forty beds. It broke my heart to see those girls jumping joyfully on the mattresses. I went back to Sri Lanka twice to take more financial help.

I deem it important to add something here. I have not written this chapter to tell the reader what a great preacher or person I am. Absolutely not. I have written these things because this is an autobiography and it needs to include everything my memory is capable of remembering. Everything that has presented itself for me to do, I have done according to my strength (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Today, there are one billion starving people in the world. Half of them live on the equivalent of one dollar a day. The other half doesn't even have that. Those are one billion empty stomachs that the church should take into consideration.

CUBA, MY SECOND MISSIONS COUNTRY

Cuba is a different story. Although I have extended my ministry through many countries in the world, my first mission has been Spain. Cuba has been the second.

I will tell an anecdote that confirms this.

My last trip to Cuba was in January of 2010. Transportation is very complicated on the island. To go from one city to another, or to travel the streets of Havana, you have to have a car. I had rented one at the airport. I have always parked the car in the hotel parking garage. One morning, I found that some driver, who may have been drunk with cheap rum, had crashed the left side of the car pretty bad. These cars are usually insured. For the insurance to come into effect, you have to file a report with the police. I went to a police station and explained my problem to the person there, a lieutenant. In his office, I gave him all of the information and he entered it in a computer.

“You have come to Cuba fifty-three times,” he said.

I was a little surprised, since I didn't know that myself; I had never stopped to count my trips to Cuba. I asked him, “How do you know that?”

"Because you are registered here in the computer."

The next question came quickly to my mind. I asked, "Last year, two million tourists came to Cuba. Are they all registered in the computer?"

"No," he answered with a smile, "only people of our interest."

That's when I understood that, for some reason, I was a person of interest for the Cuban government.

After having traveled to Cuba fifty-three times, I can affirm with authority that it has been my second mission country.

Since its independence in 1898, Cuba has continually gone through internal political struggles. Coup d'états have happened frequently: I get you out so I can come in; I kill you so I may live.

On July 26, 1953, a young lawyer named Fidel Castro, who at the time was twenty-six years old, attacked the army barracks in two cities in the east: Bayamo and Santiago de Cuba. In Santiago—the second most important city after Havana—he attacked a famous barracks called Moncada. Castro had with him a group made up of 135 men and some women, all of them young. This operation was not successful; sixty-nine men who were with Fidel died. Castro was condemned to thirteen years in prison. He was in prison only two years. In May of 1955, he was set free, along with other prisoners and his brother Raúl, who currently rules Cuba.

Once he came out of jail, Castro spent a few months in New York, and from there he went to Mexico, where he began to prepare for a revolution against then-President Batista. He bought an old yacht from an older American man. The name of the yacht was *Granma*, and it arrived on the coast of Cuba on December 2, 1956 with Castro and eighty-two other men to whom he had sold his ideas, among them the Argentine Che Guevara.

The members of the expedition made their way into the mountains immediately, a place called Sierra Maestra. Batista's troops killed sixty-two of the eighty-two men who went with Castro. With only twenty men left, Fidel, his brother Raúl, and Che Guevara initiated a *guerrilla* war. And they won; they were able to defeat Batista's formidable army. On January 8, 1959, Fidel Castro made his triumphal entry into Havana and in a few years he had complete

power. In 1961, Fidel declared his government Marxist-Leninist, and the problems with the United States began.

Two Americans of Cuban origin who lived in Miami, José Ramírez and Ernesto Estévez, had arrived in Cuba in 1937 to establish the church there. To their advantage, they could speak the language. Between the two of them, they did good work and started several congregations. When Fidel took power on the island, Ramírez returned to the United States, but Estévez stayed there until he passed away.

I was always very attracted to Cuba. The fact that it was a Marxist country represented a challenge for me. I wanted to preach the gospel to Cubans.

I started corresponding with Ernesto Estévez in 1975. The Internet didn't exist back then; we wrote letters. I wanted to go to Cuba, but the Cuban embassy in Madrid had not granted me a visa to enter the country. I tried several times. Once, they told me they already knew me and wouldn't give a visa to an ex-Marxist journalist converted to Christianity. The last time I requested a visa was in 1982. I received a telegram from the Cuban embassy that read: "Visa denied." They could have not answered, or they could have called, but they had the courtesy to send me a telegram that I still keep among my papers.

In December of 1984, I received a letter at my house in Madrid from the secretary of state of Nicaragua, Miguel D'Escoto, who asked me to attend the presidential inauguration of Daniel Ortega. The Sandinista guerrilla movement, which had close ties with Cuba, had triumphed in the country and Ortega had been elected president of Nicaragua. The secretary of state added in his letter that the government would pay for all the expenses, both airplane ticket to and hotel stay in Managua. Why did they send me that invitation? I didn't know. I had met a female *guerrillera* fighter in Managua and we became good friends. Her name was Halima and she came to have a very important position in Ortega's government. I thought she may have had a part in it, and she confirmed it later when she was in Madrid on her way to India, where she was named ambassador. I spent three days with her in Madrid, showing her the capital, the city of Toledo, the Escorial, and other tourist sites.

Because of her influence, I was the only Spanish reporter who was present at the inauguration of President Ortega in Nicaragua. Today, after many years in the opposition, Ortega is president once more and a friend of Cuba's more than before.

Those of us who had been invited stayed in the Hotel Camino Real. Those were the times of the Soviet Union. The inauguration took place in the Plaza de la Revolución in front of five thousand people, among whom were important politicians from the Soviet Union and other communist countries of East Europe. There were also some intellectual friends of the new regime, among others Colombian Nobel Prize for Literature recipient Gabriel García Márquez. I spoke with him several times, and I have a very nice photograph of the two of us together.

Naturally, Fidel Castro was also there since he had contributed to the victory of the Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua. I followed him with my eyes all the time at the hotel; I wanted to speak with him, but it seemed very difficult. I was possibly the most insignificant person in that hotel, but I didn't get discouraged. I have always been attracted to difficult goals.

The opportunity presented itself one afternoon when I saw Fidel talking with the Catholic bishop Antonio Vega, president of the Bishop Conference in Nicaragua. There were a few people around them. I approached Castro and, interrupting the conversation, I said, "Mr. President, may I ask you a question?"

He looked at me intensively with a piercing look, and then asked without much interest: "Who are you, boy?"

"I'm Juan Antonio Monroy, Spanish reporter."

"And what do you want to ask?"

"I want to know why there isn't religious freedom in Cuba."

If a look could kill, I wouldn't be writing this right now. The sharpness in his eyes announced his anger. Three bodyguards were very close to him. Fidel's look was a look that could penetrate from afar, like the smell of freshly cut grass. He let the words out with a military accent:

"If you think there isn't religious freedom in Cuba, come and see for yourself."

The bodyguards were getting close to me. My heart was beating harder than normal. I said one last thing:

"I want to do that, Mr. President. I want to go to Cuba, but your embassy in Madrid won't give me a visa."

This time, he answered a little more relaxed, without anger: "Try again."

He said no more. He turned around and continued talking with Bishop Vega.

The first three days of my stay in Nicaragua—Wednesday, Thursday, and part of Friday—were completely devoted to functions for President Ortega's inauguration. His government had invited me and paid for all my expenses, so it was only fair that I attended. At the end, I saw Secretary of State Miguel D'Escoto at a meeting, and I went to him. I thanked him for the invitation, and I told him I was going to move to a different hotel and that I was going to pay for it. I wanted to stay in Nicaragua ten more days to devote to activities with the church of Christ. D'Escoto was a Catholic priest, one of many who supported the Sandinista revolution.

"Besides being a reporter, I'm a preacher of the gospel," I said.

"We know that," he replied kindly. "You may stay in Nicaragua as long as you wish."

So I stayed. I interviewed some politicians. I also met with preachers of the church that I knew, and we organized conferences in congregations around the country. I spoke three nights in Managua about the unity of the church. I spoke in other cities, accompanied by Luis García, Pedro Salvador Batres, Javier García, and Leonel Valle, all of whom were preachers in the church. My last time preaching in Managua was on a Sunday afternoon. There were eight hundred people in attendance. Among other things, I said that the Bible had been ahead of Karl Marx's time when five thousand years earlier it denounced the exploitation of workers. The message was broadcast in its entirety on the powerful radio station *Radio Corporación* free of charge.

I flew back to Spain on the Spanish airline Iberia. My heart, my soul, and my mind were full of so many new experiences.

MY WORK IN CUBA

How can it be possible for the president of a nation—having so many important issues in his head and so many papers on his desk—to remember a brief conversation he had with an insignificant foreign reporter?

Well, Fidel Castro kept in mind those few minutes we talked in Nicaragua. In the fall of 1985, I got my visa in Spain to travel to Cuba. I don't know if he personally gave the order, or if he communicated it through one of his subordinates, but he kept his promise.

When Castro assumed political power in 1959, there were already about two thousand members of the church of Christ throughout the island. When I arrived for the first time, there were less than four hundred members who met in six small congregations. Three of them utilized buildings that had been bought between Ramírez and Estévez in Havana, Consolación del Sur, and Santiago de Cuba. The other three met in homes in Matanzas, Santa Cruz del Norte, and San Antonio de los Baños. The congregations were led by nine men who had remained faithful to the Lord and challenged the lack of religious freedom and the Cuban government laws against Christians, and also by the children of those men who had followed in their fathers' footsteps faithfully. These men were Demetrio Mustelier (one of his sons, a doctor, is now the preacher in

a church in Santiago de Cuba), Julio Alfonso Abreu and his son Julio Alfonso, René Cruz, Fernando Oliver, José Antonio Fernández (one of his sons who has the same name preaches now in a thriving church in Matanzas and works for Herald of Truth), Roberto Flores, Reynaldo Manrique, and Ammiel Pérez, who represents the churches of Christ before the Cuban government.

I was able to get Fernando Oliver out of Cuba; he had a kidney disease. Paying money in Miami and Havana, I was able to bring him to Spain with his wife and only daughter, who at the time was sixteen years old. The family was in Spain for two years, and from there they went to Miami. Their daughter married a man from Spain and stayed here. We grew very fond of Oliver in Spain; he was a great worker.

None of these preachers were working in the church full time. None of them had support from overseas. No preacher or missionary had ever gone to Cuba since the victory of the revolution of 1959. They felt abandoned and lived in poverty, like all other Cubans.

The first thing I did when I made contact with the Cuban brethren was approach the government administration. I wanted the authorities to know the church and to know what I was doing. I called Raúl Suárez, a representative in Congress who belonged to the *Bautistas Libres (Free Baptists)*. Suárez was also the president of the council of churches in Cuba, a government institution that controls the religions on the island. Suárez was very kind to me. The interview I did with him was published in Spain. I invited him to come to Spain to see how the laws of religious freedom worked. He and his wife stayed in my house for a week. All of his expenses were paid for by the brethren from the church in Madrid. He was a key man and I wanted him to know the church of Christ in Spain and help us in Cuba. I still keep a photograph of him and me on the rooftop of the building where I had my office. I talked with Suárez about granting our congregations a legal-entity status so they could function according to the laws of the country and be respected by the government.

The second step was calling a meeting with the nine preachers. I explained the issue to them and they were scandalized. They said they didn't want any kind of tie with the communist government. I explained to them that it wasn't

about having a relationship with the government, but rather about respecting the laws of the country and being a member of the council of the churches in Cuba. I had the same experience in Spain, so I knew what I was dealing with. The Spanish government was a fascist government, the opposite of the Cuban government. But I didn't care about the different political colors, I was after the greater good of the church. We, as Christians, have to respect the laws of the country where we live.

When the time came to vote, the majority understood my reasoning and said yes. A board was formed with five people. Ammiel Pérez was named president; with great skill, he has been able to maintain a friendly relationship between the church of Christ and the government. In these years, the government has showed favor in many areas and has stated that the most serious religious denomination in Cuba, and the one that has never caused any problems, is the church of Christ.

In 2003, I wrote and published a biography of Frank País in Spain. He was another Fidel in the times of the revolution. He was the son of a Baptist pastor who had come from Spain. The army of General Batista killed him when he was only twenty-three years old and a hero of the revolution. Nowadays, his name is all over Cuba. This young man's story made an impact on me, so I did some research and wrote his biography. I sent some copies of the book to the political and cultural authorities of Cuba. High in the upper levels of the government, they liked the book. In 2007, they had eight thousand copies printed in Havana so that the youth in Cuba would know this hero's story. A reporter friend from Cuba told me that it was the first time in the history of the Cuban revolution that a book by a Christian author had been published. This book opened many doors.

During that first trip, I preached in all the small congregations and baptized twelve people.

When I went back to Spain, I immediately did two things: I contacted all the churches I knew in the United States and explained to them the situation in Cuba, asking them to financially support one of the preachers with 300 dollars a month. I was able to get that for two of them: Alfonso Abreu and Ammiel

Pérez. I was able to get 100-150 dollars for Roberto Flores, Demetrio Mustelier, and Reynaldo Manrique. Others would come later. A church in Ponca City, Oklahoma, showed a lot of interest in Cuba and sent 150 dollars a month to several preachers.

The second thing I did was write several articles that were published in the United States. I explained that we already had an open door in Cuba and that these brethren, who had been forgotten for so many years, needed our help.

In the following years, elders and preachers from the United States started going to Cuba. They came in contact with the churches and found other preachers. They also helped with the work of the church and with social work.

I will not mention names this time because I would have to name many and would probably forget some. But at this time I would like to thank God for the churches and preachers in the United States who, through the years and to this day, have provided help for this communist island. Had it not been for them, the church would not have grown so much in Cuba.

What I'm writing now can be read in a matter of minutes. But this work took me many months and years of travels, projects, preaching throughout the island and looking for other preachers, and contacting churches in the United States; the kind of work in which you leave behind the skin of your body, part of your heart, and your whole soul.

Herald of Truth decided to go into Cuba in 2000. It opened an office in the city of Matanzas—about eighty-seven miles from the capital—and put Tony Fernandez as the manager, a young, dynamic man, very educated, a professional musician and member of the symphonic orchestra in Matanzas. Tony has led the church with the most members in all the island. The president of Herald of Truth signed a contract for five weekly radio programs with the powerful radio station Trans World Radio in Ecuador. In Madrid, I wrote and recorded five fifteen-minute programs and sent them to the station in Quito. Tony receives about seventy letters each month. He sends a New Testament to each person who writes to him, and he invites them to start a correspondence Bible study. Through my ties with the government, I have been able to have them authorize 50,000 New Testaments coming into the island on three

different occasions. The New Testaments are printed in Colombia, where it can be done for less money, and sent Cuba. Today, we have two radio programs instead of just one. I do one and Timothy Archer—who speaks and writes in perfect Spanish—does another one. Tony Fernández continues sending New Testaments and visiting the listeners. In almost every church in Cuba, there are people who have been converted through Herald of Truth.

When I went to Cuba in 1980, the church had four hundred members. Today, there are three thousand members in about one hundred congregations. I am not writing this chapter to tell the reader that this growth is due to my work. Absolutely not—I am not crazy yet. The growth is due first to all the Christians in Cuba who have been converted through the years. Second, it's due to the churches and brethren in the United States who have been financially supporting the congregations and their preachers. I credit myself with being the first one to go to the island and contribute to cultivating friendly ties between the government and the church. I have also baptized about four hundred people in those fifty-three trips to the island that the immigration service has registered in their computer. Anyway, whoever it might be, we all have to boast in the Lord and the cross of Christ. Some plant the seeds, others water, but God is the one who makes the growth possible. Amen?



Dr. Norvel Young conferring on Monroy the title of Doctor Honoris Causa on behalf of Pepperdine University, 1970.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In the summer of 1964, I made my first trip to the United States. Since then, how many times have I gone back? Seventy? Ninety? I don't know. The immigration offices at the airports where I have come in—New York, Miami, Chicago, and Dallas—don't register in their computers every person who enters the country. They don't say anything if they do.

My travels have taken me from one end of America to the other. Edward Fitzgerald said in one of his poems that nobody comes to show us the way; we have to travel to find it ourselves.

I am reaching the end of my journey; my life on earth is coming to an end. I don't need to practice flattery to earn anybody's favor or for any financial interests. Therefore, I can say in all honesty and with pride that the United States of America is a great country, a welcoming nation with many opportunities for those who are willing to work. You have to admit it: the United States is a great, powerful country that seeks peace and friendship with all nations, even though this is a difficult task, sometimes almost impossible.

Out of the fifty states, I have been in twenty-nine. I have traveled the warm lands of the south, been to the old west and the sophisticated west, the Great

Lakes regions, and the Atlantic coast. I have visited cities that are the cradle of America, like Pennsylvania and New York, a world in itself. French writer Paul Morand said that New York is the first Jewish city in the world, the second Italian city, the third German city, and the only capital of Ireland. If he had been writing today, he would have added that it's also the biggest city of Puerto Rico. Nobel Prize winner Sinclair Lewis said that New York is an international city with Russian Jews dressed in London, who frequent Italian restaurants with Greek waiters serving to the sound of African music.

Throughout the years, I have preached in churches and given lectures in universities and cultural centers in the following twenty-nine states: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington D.C., Virginia, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Kansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Minnesota, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington state.

I have been to some cities only once, many times to others, especially in Texas, Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Alabama.

What have I done in these states? I have preached in churches that called me. They wanted to hear my testimony and encourage the congregation; they wanted topics of evangelism for visitors and lessons for the young. They asked me to challenge the members to become more involved in missions.

I also spoke on lectureships at several universities: three years at Pepperdine University; three years at Abilene Christian University; Oklahoma Christian University; David Lipscomb University in Nashville; Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee; Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas; International Bible College in Florence, Alabama; and Lubbock Christian University in Texas. I have also spoken at the Preachers Training School in Lubbock and at the Memphis Training School in Tennessee.

I think I have been the only foreign preacher who has spoken in so many churches and universities in the United States. According to the testimonies I received, the young people who heard me were very satisfied. It was a new voice to them, my topics were different, and I included many literary references in

my sermons and lectures. The first book in my heart is the Bible, the second is *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, and in third place is literature in general. I love literature from all countries but especially European, Russian, and American literature: Tolstoy, Turguenev, and Dostoevsky fascinate me as much as Hemingway, Faulkner, and Steinbeck.

In some of the churches and schools that I have mentioned, I preached in English. Beginning in 1969, when I joined Glenn Owen, I preached in Spanish and he was my translator.

I met Glenn in 1967 when he was a missionary in Brazil. He had heard of me, so he got on a plane and came to Madrid. That was Glenn: impulsive, not much thinking but a lot of action. In 1968, the Pan American Lectureship took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Glen invited me as a keynote speaker and I spoke four nights on the topic "Men of Fire," as I had been asked. I put all these lectures together in a book that I published with that same title. The book was published in three editions in Spanish and one in English; the translation of the book was done by Claude R. Hoccot from Houston.

At that time, Glenn was heading several Christian radio stations in Brazil. The work was not successful, so he and his family returned to Abilene. On a trip I made to this city in 1969, the president of Herald of Truth, Clois Fowler, called me to his office and said: "Juan, what do you say if Glenn comes to work with us?" I replied, "I think it's an excellent idea."

Since then, Glenn became my shadow. He went where I went. We became a pair of preachers that got to be very well known among the American churches. He was an excellent translator; he translated not only my words but also my gestures, my postures in the pulpit, the modulation of my voice, and I would even say he translated my thoughts.

At a church in Dallas, a woman once asked us: "When do you rehearse these sermons?" We both laughed. Hearing Glenn and me could certainly give that impression, but I say today with my hand on the Bible that—believe it or not—every time we stepped on the pulpit, Glenn never knew what I was going to speak about. Sometimes the topic had been announced in church bulletins or in university newspapers. But he never saw a single one of my sermon or

lecture outlines. He didn't need to. I began speaking and he followed me with great ability and confidence.

When Glenn passed away in 2001 at a relatively young age, I felt like an orphan. A part of me died, too. I had lost a brother, a work partner, a man with whom I had a friendship of thirty-two years.

Since Glenn left me, I have not wanted to have any other translator. Now, when I am asked to preach in the United States, I do it in English, as I did in my first years.

I have written about what I have given the church in the United States since November of 1964 until today. The church in this great country has also given me a lot. I have received love and care; I have made great friends; I have met elders who have supported my broad ministry financially and with much patience.

To my brothers in that part of the world I only have words of thanks. I am grateful to them, to the churches, and to the institutions. Pepperdine University in California gave me a *Honoris Causa* Doctorate in Humanities. I had the privilege of sitting next to General Omar Bradley, a World War II five-star hero who also received a doctorate from Pepperdine the same day and at the same time I received mine. I was also recognized with a Communications Award from Abilene Christian University.

At the proposal of my friend Lyle Harms, I was named Honorable Citizen of Oklahoma; and through the influence of Bob Bailey, I was also named Honorable Citizen of Texas. The mayor of the city of Houston, Louis Welch, presented me with the key to the city. The ceremony took place in his office; he gave me a small box with a key inside. When I returned to Spain and I showed it to my wife, this was her comment: "They open such a big city with such a small key." I don't think it was ignorance; rather, it was a touch of humor.

Since the beginning of my conversion, I have applied to my life the words of Christ to Ananias about Paul: "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

I have also carried the gospel to gentiles, to some Jews in Morocco, and to the king of Spain. I will talk about the latter in a future chapter.

THE POWER OF RADIO

I have always believed in the power of radio as an instrument for evangelism, more so than television. To watch TV you have to sit down at a specific spot in front of the screen. But the radio can be heard while you are in the kitchen, while you are driving your own car or riding in a taxi, in the office, in businesses, in hospitals, and in many other places where it is not possible to sit down in front of a television set.

I see both radio and TV in the Bible. In the first verses of Genesis, God speaks: "Let there be light." The image of God couldn't be seen, He was invisible, but his voice could be heard. That is radio. You can't see the person who is speaking; perhaps you know his or her name, but that's all. Nobody knows what the person looks like.

In the New Testament, the Word becomes flesh, the Word spoken in Genesis. People can hear him and touch him and have a clear idea of his physical appearance. This is television.

It's possible that my interpretation has nothing to do with reality; it's only my suggestion. We have thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament; radio beats TV by twelve books.

When men like Faraday, Maxwell, Hertz, Popof, Marconi, and other great scientists in the nineteenth century developed communication through

radio, a new era began for humanity. Understanding among nations took on a new dimension. Time and space barriers came down. It was a new way—unknown until then—to allow all members of the human family to communicate their joys and their dreams, their victories and their defeats, their fears and their hopes.

Radio renewed the miracle of Pentecost, when people from different countries heard the voice of the apostle Peter, each in their own language.

Francis Henry Taylor, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York between 1940 and 1957, shared the following ideas about the power of the radio: "I would think that radio is the most important vehicle for the dissemination of ideas that has never come to hand. I think it is just as important as the invention of printing was in the fifteenth century."

James says that every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights (James 1:17). God has given wisdom to human beings for this kind of discovery so that we can communicate with wondrous speed through extraordinary distances.

The church must utilize this gift of God to transmit the message of the gospel, preaching through the waves the good news of salvation, especially in these dark times when radio stations broadcast evil news daily.

We live in a world that is extremely difficult for the longings of our souls. There is a widespread sense of loneliness and isolation. But human beings are also mounting new efforts at communication. A person grows as long as he practices dialogue. The man created right out of God's hands and living in paradise was still an unhappy man, since he didn't have anyone to talk with. Lack of communication is a violation of the plan that God has designed for his creatures.

This is the project that Jesus takes on and develops throughout his ministry. From the declaration at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-20), until his last cry on the cross when he committed his spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46), the three years of his ministry on earth were continuous communication with the poor and the rich, the sick and the healthy, the religious and the nonbelievers, the twelve apostles and the crowds scattered on the grass.

That's what radio basically is: communication. God helped me understand this since he saved me for eternity and also for this world. And I put into practice his gift as much as it has been possible for me.

When I arrived in the United States, there were thousands of congregations of churches of Christ in the country. Was it a coincidence that God directed my steps toward the only congregation that had a broad radio ministry? Sumerlin told me then that my encounter with the church at the World Fair in New York had been published in the *Christian Chronicle*. Several churches had contacted him because they wanted me to go talk with the elders. Why did I stay with the Highland Church? As a Christian, I do not believe in chance. All of our steps, whether we understand this or not, are guided by God. I loved the radio because I was convinced of how important it was to reach unbelievers. And Highland was where the radio was.

After that last meeting with the elders to talk about the millennium, Art Haddox asked to pray before we were dismissed. Then one of the elders, W. F. Cawyer, stood up and said, "One moment, I have one more question for Brother Monroy."

I didn't think there would be more questions. But he continued: "Brother Monroy, is it possible to include programs of the Herald of Truth in radio broadcasts in Spain?"

The man speaking was a short man about age seventy. He seemed like a dynamic person, restless, nervous, never relaxed. I didn't even know that the church had a radio ministry. I didn't know what Herald of Truth was. The question took me by surprise, but I liked it.

I said that it was impossible in Spain. All radio stations—those that belonged to the state and the private ones—were practically ruled by the government and controlled by the Catholic Church. They didn't have any non-Catholic religious programs. To answer his question in a broader manner, I added: "It is not allowed in Spain. But if you are interested, I can try in other countries in Europe that have short wave. I could do the programs in Madrid and send them to other countries."

With euphoria, he replied: "Brother Monroy, let's go to Europe!"

W. F. Cawyer had already decided, but I noted that the other elders were not all in agreement. Art Haddox said to him: "Let's leave that for now, brother Cawyer. We will analyze it slowly."

We left the topic aside that night. But Cawyer continued with his idea. The next day he called me into his office; he had definite ideas. He said he was willing to have programs in Spanish from Herald of Truth. He asked me to make all the arrangements when I moved to Spain and stay in touch with him.

I naturally made arrangements. Radio was important in my work of evangelism. Cawyer told me that that year Herald of Truth was transmitted through 542 radio stations and 123 TV stations in the United States; why not try that from Europe to Spain?

Why not? I asked myself. I tried it, and we succeeded.

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LOOKING FOR RADIO STATIONS

I didn't wait until I had moved and settled in Madrid. In March of 1965, I started making arrangements. I tried in France, Switzerland, and Italy, the countries closer to Spain. No radio station wanted religious programs. Andorra—very close to Spain—was influenced by Spanish laws. They also said no. An ideal small country would have been Monte Carlo, where actress Grace Kelly married Prince Rainier, chief ruler of the principality. But the powerful station in Monte Carlo had signed a contract of exclusivity with Trans World Radio and there wasn't any room left for the church of Christ.

I didn't get discouraged; I didn't give up. After several tries, I succeeded in Luxembourg.

Luxembourg is a small country of only 1,606 square miles located in Western Europe. It's bounded by Belgium, Germany, and France and was founded in the year 963 by the youngest son of a count named Sigfrido.

From Tangier, I spoke over the phone with the director of the station several times. I explained what I wanted and he said we could come to an agreement. He asked me to come see him and bring some cassette tapes to check the quality of the recordings, and we would sign the contract.

I drove all the way. From Tangier, I boarded the car on the ferry toward Algeciras. I crossed the country on the *España* Highway from south to north, part of France, part of Germany, and I arrived in Luxembourg. The station was powerful, but the price they charged for each program was high. I called Cawyer and he told me to sign a contract for two programs a week. In this way Herald of Truth traveled across the skies of part of Europe and got to Spain. The fifteen-minute programs were in Spanish. I opened a post office box in Madrid, which was where the letters were sent requesting the New Testaments that we offered for free.

We broadcast in Luxembourg from March of 1965 until November of 1968. In 1968, there was a glimpse of religious freedom in Spain, and I thought it was time for an attempt within the country. I spoke with the directors of a commercial station in Madrid: *Radio España*, and I got a good price for the broadcasting of three programs a week. The program was also transmitted by four other stations besides *Radio España*. I was thrilled; I couldn't believe it. We got more letters than we did when the program was broadcast from Luxembourg.

As the popular saying goes, though, the devil never sleeps. The war between him and me had been declared. He defeated me frequently and I won on a few occasions. At the beginning of 1969, roughly one year since the beginning of the broadcasting, the manager of *Radio España* called me to his office. He said he listened to my program from time to time to evaluate it, as was his duty. He liked it, but said he couldn't continue to broadcast it. The Catholic hierarchy had protested before the government for allowing the Protestants to use a radio station. The government then told the director to take it off the air.

I didn't give up then, either.

The doors were closed for Herald of Truth in Spain, but they opened in Portugal.

I found out that in Oporto, the second most important city in Portugal after Lisbon, there were possibilities. I didn't use the telephone this time. I lived in Spain, and Oporto wasn't too far away. I got in the car and drove to Oporto. I was there for a week and returned to Spain with a contract for Herald

of Truth to broadcast four fifteen-minute programs a week. The radio station in Oporto was a powerful AM station that could be heard clearly in Spain. We received letters from Spain and from Portugal. Letters were answered at our office in the Christian bookstore managed by Mercedes Zardaín. We also sent New Testaments from there and offered Bible correspondence courses.

I was happy with the station in Oporto, but my goal was Spain. I continued making contacts with some politicians and other government-related people until, in January of 1972, I was able to get an official authorization to sign contracts with commercial stations. I did not return to *Radio España*; I negotiated with another station: *Radio Intercontinental*. Since the price for the broadcast was much less expensive than in Luxembourg and Oporto, I signed a contract for five weekly programs Monday through Friday. These programs have been broadcast nonstop to this day.

In the present time, I continue producing a fifteen-minute program five days a week. But we don't pay any money for them; a chain of seventeen FM stations broadcasts the programs for free twice a day. The director told me that my programs represent an important contribution to the chain. Herald of Truth only pays for the everyday expenses in the office. Another strong station in Madrid that broadcasts through the Internet alone also transmits three programs a week, which are heard in Spain and countries in Latin America.

The honor that nobody can take away from us is that Herald of Truth was the first non-Catholic religious program that was authorized in Spain in all the history of the country. We made history.

Besides the United States and Spain, Herald of Truth has spread to other countries: Mexico, Portugal, and Cuba. I will add a few more things about Cuba besides what I've already written.

In January of 2000, I spoke with the director of Herald of Truth at the time about the convenience of signing a contract for a program for Cuba. After some paperwork, the program was taken by Trans World Radio station from Quito. The irony of destiny! I was the first broadcaster this station had when it started in Tangier in 1955. I was going back to its microphones now, but this time we had to pay.

Herald of Truth set up an office in Matanzas and hired the services of a full-time preacher: Tony Fernández. Matanzas is a historical city about fifty-five miles from Havana. It has a beautiful bay that covers a wide area in that region.

Tony Fernández is the son of José Antonio Fernández, one of the few preachers who stayed loyal to the Lord when the Marxist revolution established itself in the country. A great man! A good, humble, committed man devoted to the church according to his skills. I met his son Tony when he was fourteen years old. He studied music in the conservatory of Havana and has become a prestigious bass player.

When Herald of Truth hired Tony, they made an excellent decision. Tony left the apartment where his father held the worship services, built a small building and then a bigger one, and now is heading the largest congregation on the island. Ammiel Pérez from Havana has been a great help in his life.

Tony has a great evangelistic spirit. Some years ago, he drew a map of the towns within a sixty-mile radius, and with the help of the church members he has started seventeen small congregations. The current president of Herald of Truth, Bill Brant, is very fond of Tony's work and has visited Cuba several times.

In his office in the church building, Tony receives between sixty and seventy letters each month. He answers each one, sends New Testaments and fliers, and offers Bible correspondence courses.

For several years, the program that I did in Spanish for Cuba was the only one that entered the island. Later, another one was added, which was written and recorded by Timothy Archer. Timothy spent many years as a missionary in Argentina, where he married a beautiful Argentine woman, Carolina. Timothy is a great worker, a smart and humble man who loves the work on the radio. He produces another fifteen-minute program that is heard on Fidel's island at a different time. Between the two of us, and with the support of Herald of Truth, we are pounding Cuba with the most explosive of all ammunitions: the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

HERALD OF TRUTH IN THE EVANGELIZATION OF SPAIN

Before writing the first radio program for *Radio Luxemburgo* in March of 1965, I spoke at length over the phone with the president of Herald of Truth. I asked him to give me some ideas about what topics I should speak about on the radio.

W. F. Cawyer answered, "It's not necessary for you to write the radio programs, brother Monroy. We will send them to you from Abilene and you will translate them."

Cawyer was a pleasant man, kind, and very conservative in doctrine. He sincerely said to me that since I was a cultured man, he thought I might be a little on the liberal side, and he wasn't going to take any chances.

That year, the Highland church had a new preacher: John Allen Chalk. I liked him a lot; he was a slender thirty-year-old man, intelligent, and very eloquent in the pulpit. Besides preaching for the congregation, Chalk also worked for Herald of Truth; he wrote sermons and recorded them for the radio.

Cawyer told me he would send me Chalk's sermons and I could translate them. That was crazy; I translated the sermons, sent a copy to Cowyer in Spanish and then he had them translated back from Spanish to English. He

wanted to make sure I had faithfully translated Chalk. All of this for fifteen minutes of radio time.

John Allen Chalk left his preaching at Highland and he also left Herald of Truth. He quit his full-time preaching ministry, but he continued helping congregations that called him. He went to school and got a degree in law. The last time I saw him, he told me he was working as a lawyer in Fort Worth. I always liked that man.

When Chalk left the radio, Cawyer asked me to write the sermons. For six months, I would send him copies of the text in Spanish and he had them translated into English to be sure of my sound doctrine. After that period of time, he let me continue on my own and said he didn't need me to send him my Spanish scripts.

A whole book would need to be written to describe the blessing that Herald of Truth has been in Spain.

In October 1994, the *Journal of Applied Missiology* published figures for the membership of churches of Christ in each country of Europe and the number of American missionaries who have worked in them. The numbers for countries close to Spain are as follows: Germany, 1,035 members and twenty-four missionaries; England, 2,600 members and twenty-eight missionaries. The numbers for Spain are 3,000 members, no missionaries.

Without missionaries from the United States, the number of Christians in Spain was higher than in neighboring countries.

Is this true? Yes, and no.

It is true that we have had no missionaries in Spain, that is, the physical presence of missionaries. But we have had one missionary that other European brothers and sisters haven't had: Herald of Truth.

In order to reach all the people and the homes where the radio is able to go, we would need an army of missionaries. And even then, their success wouldn't be the same as the success accomplished by the radio. It has been said that information is power. And so is communication. The voice is more powerful than the pen or the computer; it communicates direct feelings, it reaches the heart of the listener, it awakens his curiosity and interest. The voice is a free

gift from God, a treasure that some use for evil but we Christians should use to do good. For the radio, the voice is everything; it is the culmination of art. A radio program that is broadcast from the Christian perspective can reach thousands, and in some cases even millions of people.

Here's an example. One Wednesday I went to the church in Madrid to teach a Bible study. My car was not running, so I took a taxi. The radio in the taxi was playing a Catholic program. I asked the driver if he was Catholic, and he answered, "No way. The religion I believe in is the one that a gentleman named Juan Antonio Monroy preaches about. He always talks about the Bible."

We arrived at the building, and he read the sign that said church of Christ. Surprised, he said, "This is the church that man preaches about."

I replied, "Yes, I'm Juan Antonio Monroy."

He wouldn't let me pay what the meter indicated. He came to the worship service occasionally and one day he came to say good-bye to me; he and his family were going to the Canary Islands. He never asked to be baptized.

Spain wouldn't have a higher number of Christians than in other countries in Western Europe if it weren't for a microphone and a voice through the ministry of Herald of Truth.

I will not go into details; I'll quote general but concrete data.

Seventy per cent of the members in Spain had their first contact with the gospel through the radio.

Nine elders in congregations in Spain went inside a church building for the first time after having heard a radio program.

Seven preachers got to know the Lord by listening to Herald of Truth programs.

In Spain, there is a special division of the police called *Guardia Civil* (Civil Guard). They are very strict. Criminals fear the Civil Guard. In the church in Madrid, a lieutenant of the civil guard was baptized; his name is José Sánchez. One Sunday, I announced from the pulpit that I had signed contracts with other radio stations in Spain. Then I asked him to pray for this work. In the middle of the congregation, he stood up and with tears he said, "Lord, I give you thanks because I was in darkness and saw the light of the gospel through the radio."

There are other stories like this. In the congregation in Madrid, three Christians who had come from Morocco expressed their desire to place membership: two men, Paco and Salvador, and a woman, Anita Manzano. Anita was a single mother; she had a young son whose father was in the military in Morocco.

Among the many letters we received in response to the radio program, one came from the Balearic Islands signed by a man called Faustino Bisbal. He said he had been listening to our radio program for a while and was requesting a New Testament. He later took our Bible correspondence course. Later on, we received another letter in which he said, "I am a single man, and I would like to meet a woman of your religion to marry."

I told Mercedes Zardain, "Send him Anita's address."

One Wednesday after the Bible study, Anita approached me and said, "I have received a letter from a man in the Balearic Islands. He says he wants to meet me. Who gave him my address?"

"I did," I replied.

"And what do I do?" she asked.



The Monroy family, August 2009 in Coiu, Spain. Juan Antonio and his wife Mercedes (center) are surrounded by their daughters, grandchildren, and sons-in-law.

“Answer him. Tell him the truth. Tell him you are single but you have a young son.”

Anita did what I advised her to do. They corresponded with each other for several months. Faustino came to Madrid to meet her, and they planned the wedding. During another trip, he was baptized and shortly after that, they got married. I officiated at the ceremony. Faustino took Anita and her son to the island. They live happily there, and they have another son.

Herald of Truth in Spain hasn't only contributed to saving lives for eternity. It has also united in matrimony a man who was lonely and a woman who had lost all hope of finding a husband. It sounds like a story from a romantic novel, but it happened in reality.

French writer Marcel Laurent tells the story of a woman who devoted many hours to listening to the radio. A friend of hers asked her on one occasion why she listened to the radio so much. And she replied, “Doctors have told me I am gradually losing my hearing capacity. The day will come when I won't be able to hear at all. I want to hear human voices before that day arrives.”

The world is going deaf in the spiritual sense. It neither hears nor wants to hear God's voice. Herald of Truth must continue broadcasting the divine Voice before people lose their sensitivity completely and their ears are turned off to the calling of the Master who summons: “Come to me.”

PRESS AND LITERATURE

Literature is a beautiful art used as an instrument of the word. We have an idea, we want to communicate it, we sit before a piece of blank paper with a pen in our hand, or before a computer, and we express that idea in words that are permanently set. This is literature. God told Isaiah the prophet: "Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness" (Isaiah 30:8). In this phrase from Jehovah to Isaiah, we find the principles of the prophetic literature. Everything people do, their desires and fears, pleasures and anger, joys and longings, everything constitutes the common place of literature. "What is literature but the crown of science?" asked Steinbeck in the mid-twentieth century. The main glory of a country is its literature.

I was born loving literature. I believe my mother fed me letters instead of milk. My memories go back to the time when I was nine years old, at which age I bought small books that told stories and I read them avidly. I learned some of them by heart. Unbelievable as it may sound, I can still recite in its entirety one of those stories that impacted me, called *Marcelo, el picapedrero*. When my daughters were little, we would travel by car to go on vacation and they would ask, "Dad, tell us the story of *Marcelo, el picapedrero*."

I could do that without taking my eyes off the road.

As I grew up, I read other types of books, but I never stopped reading. Nowadays, I read a book a week, no matter how long it might be.

One of those books from my youth left its mark and influenced my atheism. It was titled *Vida de Jesús (Jesus' Life)* by Ernesto Renán. I read it when I was sixteen years old. Renán was a French Jesuit from the nineteenth century who left the Catholic Church and embraced the atheist way of thinking. He lived in Palestine for twenty years studying the life of Jesus. When he went back to France, he published this book, which was scandalously received by some and joyfully by others. All of its pages are devoted to demonstrating that Jesus Christ is not God. But at the end of this magnificent work, his thinking betrays him.

German philosopher and poet Johan Goethe said that anyone who reads a lot ends up writing.

This happened to me. One week after I was baptized, I wrote my first article from a Christian point of view titled *No se hace justicia al obrero* (There is no justice for the worker). I still have a copy. Back then, there was a workers' strike in Tangier asking for justice in their working hours and their salaries. I took advantage of that incident to talk about those people and to say that the world had not done justice to another worker: Jesus of Nazareth.

From that article to the last article I wrote a few hours ago, I figure that by the end of my life I will have written between 3,000 and 3,500 articles. Many of them have been compiled in books.

Articles are a genre of literature that is sold to the public day after day. It's a tribute to the present reality. Not even the journalist has time to digest all the information that comes to him twenty-four hours a day. In the times of globalization where we live, with all the large press, Internet, radio, and television agencies that connect countries from one end of the world to the other, articles can't just talk about the happenings of the day, like before; rather, they must speak about the happenings of the moment.

Books are different. Good books contain medicine for the soul, like pharmacies contain medicine for the body. "Then the LORD said to Moses: Write

this on a scroll as something to be remembered . . ." (Exodus 17:14). "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God . . ." (Deuteronomy 31:26). Books are faithful counselors and loyal friends; they awaken the understanding and teach about life; they are guards that warn us about the dangers that lie ahead of us. I have some 6,000 books in my house. I am not talking about my spiritual life now, but rather about my human life in general: everything I know, everything I am, I owe it all to the books. The true university consists of a good collection of books.

During a trip I took to Abilene in 1967 when I was looking for funds to buy a building for the church in Madrid, I said from the pulpit at Highland: "Help me buy the building, and I promise I will establish twenty-five congregations in Spain and write fifty books."

After the service, a deacon friend of mine, Jack McGlothlin, came to me and said with a smile, "Juan, you will need two lives to fulfill that promise."

Well, no. I will not need another life. Everything I promised, I have achieved in this life. With the help of many other brethren in Spain, I have established twenty-five churches. On June 8, 2010, my fiftieth book made its appearance in the bookstores. Others have cooperated in the establishing of the churches. I have written the books by myself.

When I wrote the first book after my conversion, I was twenty-four years old. That was in 1953; I was preaching in a town called La Orotava in Tenerife, Canary Islands. Two young women attended the church there: Pepa and Nieves. Their father was a degenerate, violent, immoral, alcoholic man. The women in the neighborhood crossed the street when they saw him, and the men were afraid of him. He seduced young women and took advantage of them. The devil exerted a very evil influence on him. He tried to kill himself three times. The first time, he cut his throat outside the door of one of his victims, a young woman with whom he had run away to another town, abandoning his family. He was taken to the hospital emergency room and stayed there twenty-eight days before being able to go home. Another time, he stole a box of dynamite used to drill mountains. When he had ignited the fuse, one of the security guards threw himself against him and snatched it off his hands. The

third time, he bought a box of rat poison and ate its contents. He was again assisted and taken to the hospital.

One day, we went to see him and took him the Gospel of Luke. He was impressed by the story of the prodigal son. On another visit, we gave him a New Testament. When he got out of the hospital, he started attending our services. And he was baptized. That man changed completely; he became a different person. People who knew him said, "We don't know if those Christians have the truth or not; what we do know is that they have converted a devil into an angel."

With his authorization, I wrote his story. I titled this short book *El poder del Evangelio (The Power of the Gospel)*. It was the first book I wrote as a Christian. I have written fifty books throughout the years. Some of them have been translated into English, Portuguese, and French. Some of them have had up to five editions. A Spanish publisher in Barcelona is publishing my *Obras Completas (Complete Works)*, which are a compilation of articles and books I've written in the past. Eleven large volumes have already been published.

Journalism has been one of my other great passions. I have always regretted the lack of vision of my brethren in the United States to create a good press. What would be the purpose? For the almost three million members that the church of Christ has in America, there's practically only one newspaper: *The Christian Chronicle*, which comes out once a month. It has more publicity and information about the churches than social topics like abortion, delinquency, drugs, divorce, politics, discrimination, abandoned children, the lost youth, poverty, hunger, and other issues that affect the people. They don't analyze the great philosophical and literary movements of our times. Very little, if anything, is written about atheism, agnosticism, existential anguish, the new theological tendencies, and the religious anguish that the human being goes through nowadays. I have seen some of these topics being dealt with in books written by preachers of our churches, but not in the press. Besides *The Christian Chronicle* we only have a few local magazines. When I spoke with brethren from the United States about this, they have almost always answered with Jesus' words: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Of what

world are we, then? Whether we like it or not, as long as we live on this earth, we are of this world and the problems of this world should be of interest to us.

I have journalism in my blood, just as I do literature. Immediately after my conversion, I decided to use journalism as an instrument to make the truths of the gospel known.

Six months after my baptism, while I was a soldier in Franco's army in the Canary Islands, I made the unwise choice of founding a newsletter that I titled *El informador cristiano canario* (*The Canary Christian Reporter*). The owner of the press saw that I was dealing with religious issues and thought I was Catholic. He didn't investigate, but when I took the first number to the church, the brethren were alarmed. They didn't know anything—I wanted to surprise them. Manuel Diaz, an elderly man and an elder in the congregation, said to me: "You are crazy, Monroy; they can put us all in jail."

It was true. I would have been the first. The preacher, Emiliano Acosta, rescued me. He said to the congregation: "Brother Monroy did this with good intentions. It's a shame he can't continue, because the newsletter is good."

I did not continue the paper. But I didn't stop, either.

In January of 1955, when I was in the land of freedom in Morocco, I founded another monthly newsletter called *Luz y Vida*. One year later, I published it in magazine format and titled it *Luz y Verdad*. I published this magazine until 1959 because it was very difficult to take issues of the magazine to Spain. In January of 1962, when I returned from England, I started publishing another monthly newsletter titled *La Verdad*, as I have already mentioned in earlier chapters.

When I left Morocco and settled in Spain, I continued with my press ministry. In January of 1966, I published the first issue of *Restauración*, a monthly thirty-two-page magazine in which I dealt with all kinds of topics. What's interesting about this magazine is that I already had the title in mind before I came in contact with the Restoration Movement in the United States. I published that magazine for twenty years, until December of 1985.

In January of 1972, I founded another monthly, thirty-two-page magazine for children titled *Primera Luz* (*First Light*). In the first issue, I said, "There

are pages for a child to laugh, to think, to learn, to increase his cultural formation, to be inspired by stories by other children, and logically there are many teachings from the Bible." This magazine was very well liked in Spain and in republics of Latin America. *Primera Luz* was published for eighteen years until December of 1990.

In August of 1987, a European lectureship took place in Metz, France. Actually, very few European preachers attended; most were American missionaries working in Europe. The topic of the Christian press was addressed there. They decided to create a magazine targeted to the church in Europe, and I was asked to oversee it. I declined at first. Being Spanish and living in Madrid, how could I do a magazine in English? They insisted; they all promised to send me articles and news and to support the project financially. Before the conference was over, I had thought of a title: *The European Challenge*. I presented it and it was approved. The first issue was published with twenty-eight pages in January of 1988. The editorial page read: "*The European Challenge* came into being as an answer to a need. The need was not invented as a pretext for the magazine. It is actually a double need: on the one hand, to fill the information void which exists among our churches on a continental scale. On the other hand, to present a challenge to European society, hence our title. This is its double mission. The church should be a constant voice available to the world. A silent church, which only speaks to itself, only goes in circles which lead nowhere."

I would write the articles in Spanish and an American writer who attended our church occasionally translated them into good English.

Six months later, those who promised to help me left me alone. They didn't send articles or news or money to pay the printing press. Some Christian leaders grow weary too soon. They work very little and they say they are tired. In spite of this, I continued publishing *The European Challenge* for two years, 1988 and 1989.

The next year, I returned to the publications in Spanish. I started a new forty-two-page magazine titled *Alternativa 2000*. We were making our way into the twenty-first century. It was published for ten years and then I stopped in December of 1999. But I couldn't live without the press. In 2005, I started

another forty-two-page magazine titled *Vínculo (Link)*, which I continue publishing to this day.

Many times I have asked myself, "Where do you find the time to do so many activities? Where?" I find it in time itself. I take time away from time and don't let time take it away from me. If a day has twenty-four hours, why work only six or eight hours? What do we do with the remaining hours?

I have always felt sorry that the church of Christ in America dedicates so little attention to the Christian press. It has been said that the press is the fourth power after the government, the senate, and the courts. I don't know if it's the fourth or the first. It has influence over the decisions of the judges, it has power in the senate, and it can help a president be elected or defeated. Richard Nixon himself experienced this when journalists from *The Washington Post* forced him to resign on August 8, 1974.

The press knows no walls, doors, or windows. It permeates everywhere. A spiritual movement like the church of Christ in America should have more and better publications.

“BEFORE THE GENTILES AND KINGS . . .”

The resurrected Christ told Ananias that he had chosen Paul to bear his name “before the Gentiles and kings.” I have preached the gospel to thousands of Gentiles. I have also spoken about the church of Christ to a king, the king of Spain, Juan Carlos de Borbón.

I have written the king of Spain four times, four long letters about discrimination against Christians in a Spain dominated by the Catholic hierarchy. I had the opportunity to speak with him in person once.

December 5-7, 1997, an Evangelical Congress took place in Madrid organized by the *Federación de Entidades Religiosas Evangélicas de España* (FEREDE—Federation of Religious Evangelical Entities of Spain). Thirty-five hundred people attended. This federation is made up of representatives of the main evangelical denominations in Spain. It doesn't have anything to do with churches, doctrines, interpretations of the Bible, worship styles, or any other issue common to denominations. This federation was founded only to facilitate dialogue with the state and to defend religious freedom and human rights. The beliefs of each representative are left at the door when we come together to talk about this type of problem. I was one of its founders back in November of 1986.

I was elected president of the federation twice. I served in that role for eight years, in two four-year periods. When the Evangelical Congress was organized in Madrid, I was president of the federation. We sent a letter to the king of Spain inviting him to attend on the last day, when I did a conference of about one hour. The king excused himself saying that he had a very busy schedule that day and couldn't attend our congress.

Since we continued insisting, he decided to welcome us in his palace ten days later. Eight representatives of the congress attended. I was the president of the entity that had organized it.

Then something very strange happened. The interview with the king took place on December 18. The day before, the queen's personal secretary called my office. She said that Her Majesty invited me to have tea with her in her palace to talk about religion. The next day was the eighteenth, the day when I had the interview with her husband, the king. I told her this, and she replied saying that she was sorry and would call on another occasion. She never did call back.

I saw everything clearly a few days later. The king did not want me to go to the palace, so he talked to his wife and asked her to invite me to tea in order to keep me away from him. But, why didn't the king want me to go as the president of the federation? It was clear as well. I was—and still am—known in Spain as an anti-Catholic and anti-Vatican writer. And it's true. I have written three books about the control of the Catholic Church in Spain and its false doctrines. The Catholic hierarchy put pressure on the king not to welcome Monroy, the anti-Catholic.

But they failed. I went to the palace; I have good pictures with the king. I knew his life since he was a young prince and about his visit to the city of Tangier, where I lived, with his father. Of the eight representatives, he spoke with me the most. He asked how the church of Christ was doing in Spain, and I said we were growing.

The Lord has given me many opportunities to speak, not only with the king, but also with important politicians in Spain, with mayors of large cities, with governors, and with three ministers of justice who were in office at three

different times. They all knew who I was, and I have testified about my faith in Christ before each of them.

I have already told about my brief conversation with Fidel Castro. I have also been able to speak with another president, Jean Claude Duvalier, who succeeded his father in 1971 as president of Haiti at the young age of nineteen. I was invited to his wedding in the Catholic cathedral of Haiti. After the ceremony, all the guests were transported in buses to a ranch outside of the city, where an abundant buffet-style meal had been prepared. I was able to speak with him and his wife, Michelle Benet, for about ten minutes. But I do not wish to say any more about this individual. He was a vicious dictator who oppressed his people; when he was thrown out of the country, he fled to Spain with as many millions of dollars as he could get his hands on.

In New York, I also spoke with some people who are known as important.

The president of Herald of Truth at the time, Clois Fowler, asked an agency in New York to organize a press conference for me in the famous Overseas Press Club of America, where very important politicians have spoken as well. The man in charge of organizing this conference was John S. Harper, from the Harper Association. This event took place in October of 1969. I spoke in English about the religious situation in Spain and the 1967 law on religious freedom, which granted some rights to non-Catholics. I have pictures with the Catholic bishop, Archibald V. McLees, director of the International Council of Brooklyn, and with Dr. Arthur C. Logan, from the Comité para la Educación y Elevación a través del Conocimiento (Committee for Education and Elevation through Knowledge). Both were present in the conference, among other celebrities.

I believe I represented Clois and Herald of Truth very well.

It's right for us to preach the gospel to the poor; but not only to the poor; we have to look higher. The rich, the famous, the politicians were also made in God's image and have an eternal soul. Whether they spend eternity in heaven or in hell is up to us. We have to approach these people without any complexes and give them a testimony of our faith in Christ.

The Old Testament prophets are an example. Besides speaking to the people, they went in the kings' palaces and rebuked them, denouncing all the

evil they were doing. They confronted powerful military men and people in higher positions who violated the laws of Jehovah.

The apostle Paul also presented the truth of the gospel before prominent public figures. He almost persuaded King Agrippa to become a Christian (Acts 26:28). He spoke at length before Felix the governor; his sermon was so full of arguments that the Judea procurator sent for Paul so that he could talk to him and his wife “about faith in Jesus Christ” (Acts 24:24).

Paul also spoke before Felix’s successor in the government of Judea: Festus, a noble man. Paul spoke with such eloquence, power, and wisdom, that Festus, knowing that Paul was an intellectual who had read many books, cried out: “Your great learning is driving you insane!” (Acts 26:24).

Great learning doesn’t drive anyone insane. I have six thousand books in my personal library and haven’t lost my mind yet. Little learning is what makes human beings into ignorant fools.

Correctly interpreting the biblical texts in Acts 25:10-11; 25:21; 27:24, and 28:19, historians who study Christianity think that Paul, in effect, appeared before Caesar. In the course of the two years that he was held captive in Rome, he won important politicians from Caesar’s court over to the Lord.

English thinker Paul Johnson published a book in 1998 that was immediately translated into the main languages. It is titled *Intellectuals*. Johnson uncovers the miseries, immoral behaviors, serious marital conflicts—lovers included—of people whom we consider to be geniuses of humanity. Writers, politicians, philosophers, heads of state, and other so-called leading figures have lived defeated lives committing all kinds of sins on a daily basis.

Who approaches these people to talk to them about the gospel and to snatch them out of the hell in which they live? Nobody. Why? Because we don’t have people who are prepared for that. Preachers are content with mediocrity; of all the many professionals we have in our churches, very few are those who speak with their work partners about Jesus and bring them to church. What a shame!

PERÚ: A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

On September 18-23 of 1967, a writers' congress took place in Perú. I was invited to do three lectures. The elders from Highland didn't want to let me go alone, I don't know why. They sent Art Haddox and Marvin Steffing to be with me. Marvin worked for Herald of Truth back then and had contacts in Peru. The president of Herald of Truth sent him to be with me at the congress and to try to get our Spanish programs broadcast on some radio stations in that country.

The last night I spent in Peru was unforgettable. The congress took place in a vacation resort called Huampani, twenty miles from the capital. We were isolated and spent hours giving or listening to lectures, and talking about books and the new printing techniques. I was not happy in that environment; I needed to get out, to see people, to talk, to browse the place, as I do everywhere I go when I'm allowed.

I took a taxi and found myself in the center of the capital at seven thirty at night, when Lima starts to be illuminated with colored lights. I walked aimlessly for some time, mingling with the people. At the *Plaza San Martín*, a political meeting was taking place. I made it to the platform where the speaker was,

but I soon discovered that I wasn't interested in all that. I was searching for something more human, because I was full of words back in those days.

My guiding star, my curiosity, or my God—whoever it was—led me to the right place: *Plaza Manco Capac*, also known as *Plaza de la Victoria*, where an impressive twenty-three-foot statue has been erected representing the founder of the Inca empire, Manco Capac.

There on the wide circle that made up the plaza were 1,200 miners lying down. They had come from the interior towns in a march of protest about their low salaries; they wanted a raise. Since the owners of the mines wouldn't listen to them, they decided to march to the capital. It took them nine days to get there by foot on the rough paths of the Andes. There they were, with swollen feet, chapped lips because of the cold, torn clothes, hungry, and with cold bodies and souls. There they were, as a public spectacle, many of them with their wives and children in identical conditions of misery. *La Prensa* had talked about them, but they had gotten very little attention.

I walked among that large group of saddened human beings. My soul was dripping with indignation; I felt very small, very ashamed. After talking with a few of the miners, I made a decision. I took a taxi to a radio station, *Radio Pacifico*. A musical program was on the air. Only one man was at the station at that time of the night. I asked him to let me make an appeal on behalf of the miners. He didn't have the authority, but he agreed to let me have the phone number of the director of the radio station, who, fortunately, was at home. I told him who I was and asked him to let me use the radio to make an appeal to the people of Lima. He replied, "One moment." I heard him speaking in English with another man who must have been close to him. He told the other man that a Spanish writer named Juan Monroy wanted to speak on the radio on behalf of the miners. The man who was with him was none other than Marvin Steffing. He had gone to his house to negotiate the broadcast of our programs in his radio station. Marvin answered: "Well, he is our man, he works with me, and we want to have his programs on your station."

More at ease, the director told me to speak only for five minutes without dealing with any political issue that could compromise him.

I spoke for fifteen minutes. I made it clear that the social or political concerns of the miners was none of my business. My urgency was solving the human problem by letting the miners have a bed and food to eat that night. My voice and my body were shaking as I spoke.

I left the station and immediately went back to the place where the miners were. People were starting to arrive in large numbers bringing clothes, food, medications, money, and even evangelical literature. We immediately formed a committee and started gathering all the donations in front of two tents that had been set up by the Red Cross. People kept coming with help of all kinds. Some took miners to their own homes. I took the opportunity to provide food for the soul as well. Among the many miners, there was a group of evangelicals. I had said on the radio who I was and where I was from. I wanted to avoid any misunderstandings. In that big plaza we sang hymns, we prayed, and we preached. The testimony that night will be unforgettable for many.

At midnight, a Baptist man came with a minivan. He picked up twelve miners—among whom were some women as well—and took six of them to a hotel and the other six to his home. Shortly after that, the mayor of the city sent some trucks, knowing that this could have social and political repercussions. They took all of the miners with their wives and children. The next day, I read in the papers that warm food had been given to all of them and they had slept in beds at a military barracks that weren't housing any soldiers at the time. Two newspapers were telling the story of a Spanish writer with a microphone who had revolutionized part of the city with the miners' story.

I went to sleep very happy that night remembering the words of Christ: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).



A MESSAGE TO YOUNG PREACHERS

Attention: this is neither a sermon nor a piece of advice. I don't lecture anyone or give unsolicited advice. What I'm writing in this last chapter of my autobiography are some simple reflections that I wish to share with young preachers.

First of all, if you have been called by God to serve him as a preacher, make sure you understand the calling.

Why are you a preacher? Why did you enroll in a Bible school, institute, or university? Are you sure you want to be a preacher because God has called you to this ministry? Beware! If you have not received the calling of the Lord to be a preacher, you will fail, as many others you know have failed. Or you will go from church to church, from state to state, and die an old man at the pulpit, except that you didn't do anything worth the trouble.

Abraham was called by God to go to a different land (Genesis 12:1).

Moses was called by God when he was tending sheep (Exodus 3:10)

Isaiah was called by God when he was in the temple (Isaiah 6:9)

Paul was called by God when he was going from Jerusalem to Damascus (Acts 9:6)

Are you sure God has called you to a ministry as sacred as the preaching of the gospel and serving the church?

If you are not completely sure, quit today and get a job in an office or selling insurance.

If you are convinced in your heart that your work is the will of God, then go ahead! But continue on your own, without looking at what other partners are doing or will do.

Learn this very well: salvation is individual. God didn't ask permission from anyone—not even your family members—to save you. Know this very well: if salvation is individual, the calling to the ministry of preaching is also individual.

Review your Bible and you will see that God never calls teams, he always calls individuals. Individuals form teams, not God. God deals with the person, not with the team: Abraham, Moses, the judges, all the prophets, Paul. Even the apostles, although they formed a group, were called individually by Christ.

When Christ communicates the calling of Paul to Ananias, he says: "This man is my chosen instrument" (Acts 9:15).

Take note of the usage of the pronoun "this." Not "that," not your brother in the church, not your study partner, not the whole congregation, not the elders, or the deacons, or your parents, or your children. "This" one. Your God is calling you. If other are left behind, don't worry. Peter thought that Christ had forgotten about John, and he asked, "Lord, what about him?" The Lord's answer is categorical: "What is that to you? You must follow me."

The whole story of the Bible shows two important things; first, since the beginning of the creation, God has had concrete plans for humanity; second, to carry out these plans, he has worked through chosen individuals.

You are one of these chosen.

Don't have any kind of complex about who you are. Feel proud of your ministry; you are more important than all the celebrities in Hollywood; more important than those who handle finances on Wall Street; more important than the president of your country. You are an ambassador for God! (2 Corinthians 5:20). Imagine the president of the United States sending you to

work in London, Paris, or Moscow. Would you be proud? Well, God is sending you as an ambassador to all the countries in the world (Acts 1:8). He's not sending Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, President Obama, or George W. Bush. He's sending you. God considers you more important than them; he speaks through you and you speak in the name of God (2 Corinthians 5:20). Is there anybody in the world with greater privileges than these?

Don't stay as you are. You are a preacher. Great! You have chosen something good in life. Now you have to choose between the good and the better. The good is being a preacher. The best is being a leader at a national level, and, if possible, at an international level as well. With your youth, your intelligence, and your energy, you can't spend your life ministering to one congregation like the parish priest does in a Catholic church.

In 1 Corinthians 3:6, Paul says that God has made you an "able minister." You already are a minister, you already are a preacher. The adjective "able" means more than that. An able preacher is a preacher who also functions as a leader.

You may say that the word "leader" is not in the Bible. It's true. The word "depression" is not there, either, and yet we find in the Old Testament great men of God who had moments of great depression. The word is not in the Bible, but the leader himself is. Abraham was a leader. Moses was a leader. Joshua was a leader. All the prophets were leaders. Paul, Timothy, Titus, and hundreds of other fervent Christians in the first few centuries of our era were leaders.

In the church of Christ we are suffering from an authentic crisis of leadership. Nothing is solved by lamenting; a remedy must be applied. I like this phrase by Abraham Lincoln: "The world needs the kind of leader that, when we vote for them, we are conscious of the fact that we are voting for God."

Lincoln was referring to the political leaders of his time. Today, we need leaders in the church. That leader can be you, don't forget. Not the church, not the elders, not the institutions. You, only you. The individual is the leader, not the community. In an article published in the American magazine *Liberty* on December 8, 1933, Albert Einstein said: "Only the individual can think; and by thinking, he can create new values for the world. Only the individual can create new moral values to point to the path to follow for generations to come."

Without decisive personalities that think and believe independently, progress is inconceivable.”

As I've said before, that leader can be you. Have you thought about it? God tells you the same thing he told Paul: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent” (Acts 18:9). Do not be silent. Speak. The world needs to hear the words of the good news coming out of your mouth. Do not be content with being the preacher in one congregation. Become a world leader. It's a tough job, I know. It implies giving up a quiet life, watching less TV, and spending less time with your family. But, who is family? Your wife and children? You are mistaken. Your family is the world, today's population of seven billion people. You have the example of Christ. When they told him that his mother and brothers were wanting to see him, he pointed at the crowd and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers” (Mark 3:34).

Your mother, your brothers and sisters, your wife, your children, they all make up a very limited group of people. The world is long, tall, and wide. These are the religions in the world today:

Muslim	1,500 million
Catholic	1,100 million
Hindu	900 million
Buddhist	700 million
Protestant	600 million
Orthodox	220 million
Anglican	110 million
African religions	150 million
Other religions	502 million
Nonbelievers	800 million
Agnostic	300 million
Jewish	18 million
Total	7,000 million

The world needs Christian leaders. Now. In this generation. You came to this world with an empty life; you have to fill it up yourself. How and with what

you are going to fill it is your business. But you could fill it by being a Christian leader.

You are young. And because you are young, I will call your attention to a quote by the famous Italian writer Giovanni Papini found in his book *El sacco del ogro* (*The Ogre's Sack*): "Every generation has a divine message to carry to the city of men; and every young person is, in this sense, an angel. The only secret for the soul not to die and corrupt the body is staying loyal to one's own youth."

You belong to this generation. From Thomas Campbell to our days, the generations that gave shape to the Restoration Movement have come and gone. Now it's your turn. You have to be loyal to your generation. What would have happened in the world if Christ had not been loyal to his generation? What would Christianity be like if Paul hadn't been loyal to his generation? I have always liked to read Acts 13:36: "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep." He died, that is. Follow this example. God will not ask you to give an account for the actions of the generations before you or the future ones. He will ask you to give an account of what you have done in your own generation, here and now.

We are responsible only for our own actions. You are not responsible for the actions of those who dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the generation of President Truman in August of 1945. You hadn't been born yet. You are responsible for your own actions, not anybody else's.

Lift up your eyes and look. There are thousands, millions of young people who are unfaithful to their own generation. They live without dreams, they are at a standstill inside, dead. Do not become one of them. Use your youth to work with enthusiasm in the best profession in the world: the ministry of preaching. More than that: be a leader of Christ for your city, for your state, for your country, for the world.

EPILOGUE

What I have written in these pages is only part of my life. In the forty-five chapters of this book, I have referred to the substantial events. Sixty years of Christian ministry covering the length and width of the world do not fit in a book. My memory stores information for more volumes like this one.

I have worked forty-six years for Herald of Truth. When I preached in churches and universities, people have always come to me saying: "I have received your letter and sent you an offering." The offerings were all received at the headquarters of Herald of Truth in Abilene, Texas. Their presidents managed and distributed the money correctly among the various ministries. They paid for the radio programs broadcast on radio stations in Spain, the purchase of New Testaments, office expenses, etc. I never had any complaint of any kind. Everything has been done in a very clean and transparent manner.

Thanks to those offerings, I have been able to do all the work I have described in this book.

Although I have been forced to write in the first person because this genre so demands, it has really been the work of three: God, you, and me. When he writes to the Corinthians, Paul says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

I don't know that I have worked more than others; that doesn't concern me. I have done what I have been capable of doing. But it hasn't been me; it has

been God in me, God directing my thoughts, God directing my actions, God directing my steps, God directing my life.

God and me. His grace has always been with me, and I have been loyal to him.

But in the story that I tell in the second half of this book, there are also people who, year after year, have supported my work by sending offerings to Herald of Truth. Without this financial collaboration, I could have hardly done everything that I have told you. I thank those people and want to tell them that I have not let them down. This work is also, in part, their work.

But life is time, and time imposes changes. Although I stay strong working twelve to fourteen hours a day and traveling thousands of miles each year to Latin America and the United States (my next two campaigns will be in Texas and Colombia), the reality is still there: we are born, we grow up, we grow old, and we die. But the work continues. Herald of Truth will continue broadcasting their radio programs to change lives and save souls. It is a work that cannot be done if brethren in Christ do not collaborate financially.

On June 6, 1944, the most important military invasion in history took place in France. Under the command of General Eisenhower, the allies disembarked on the beaches of Normandy and the German troops were defeated. This victory was possible because four countries united their power: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France.

I am convinced that the Herald of Truth wants to disembark with the message of salvation in Christ in the hearts of each one of the seven billion inhabitants who populate the earth. But they can't do this on their own. To be victorious, they need the help of all the brotherhood and they need help from you, who have just finished reading this book today.

Appendix

“A MAN OF FIRE”

A Biography of Juan Antonio Monroy (1971)

BATSELL BARRETT BAXTER

Early in his teaching, Jesus compared the word of God to seed which is planted in the hearts of men. Some hearts reject the word as meaningless; some accept it as vital to life and being. But does the word of God produce the same results in every generation?

PART I: THE WORD OF GOD IS A SEED

I recently saw an unusual shadow-box, designed to hang in a kitchen or breakfast room. It was divided into compartments, each of which was filled with seeds of different kinds. The many sizes; shapes and colors of seeds combined to make a really attractive decoration.

With more than just a touch of nostalgia, I looked at those seeds and remembered boyhood visits to the farm supply stores where, especially in the spring, many kinds of seeds would be offered for sale. The sights and sounds and aromas of such a place are easily remembered. And with equal ease and quickness comes the recollection of what the seeds represent: the ongoing of life.

It is humbling to think of what a seed portrays - of the promise it holds. Depending on its kind, and assuming proper sustenance, it may eventually produce a beautiful and fragrant flower, or a tasty and nourishing fruit, or a majestic tree, or—even mother-human life made in the image of God. Every living

thing, from the African violet on your coffee table, to the giant redwood tree in the California forest, began with a seed.

One day as Jesus talked with a group of people (probably farmers) in his native land, he described how the seed that a farmer scattered would fall into different kinds of soil. The seed which fell on the hard-packed wayside path could not be expected to flourish; but that which fell on the well-prepared, good, rich soil could be expected to produce a plentiful harvest. As the people listened to the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9; Luke 8:5-8), they knew that Jesus was talking about more than seed, soil and harvest. When the disciples asked that He explain the parable (Luke 8:9), the Lord began with a marvelous declaration: "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11).

The seed is the word of God! That means, according to Jesus, that what a man becomes depends on whether and how he receives the word of God. Our destiny is determined by the kind of seed-bed we make available for God's word.

The fact that the word of God is the seed of the kingdom also means that the seed will consistently produce the same fruit. The law of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7) guarantees that the word of God will produce the same results in every generation.

Jesus gave His apostles one of the greatest challenges imaginable - to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). When they began to carry out their assignment we are not surprised to learn the results the Bible records. When the gospel was preached in Jerusalem (Acts 2), Samaria (Acts 8), Caesarea (Acts 10), or Antioch (Acts 11), the results were the same: people believed and turned in obedience to God. Not everyone was converted, of course, because the seed did not always fall on good ground. But when the gospel did fall on receptive ears the results were always the same: the people became Christians.

As we think of the preaching of the gospel of Christ—the planting of the seed—and the salvation that results for those who accept the implanted word, our thoughts go back to God who loved us enough to give His only begotten Son that we might be saved through Him. It is God the Father who is the ultimate source of all our blessings.

PART II: THE SEED STILL PRODUCES CHRISTIANS

I have often thought that, because the Bible says that the word of God is the seed, it ought to be possible to find examples of people who, guided only by the Bible, have become just Christians. And I have rejoiced to know the stories

of several people in whom this principle has been impressively at work. I am thinking of a former priest in Italy, a policeman in Nigeria and some others who have provided a fertile and willing spirit for the word of God. They have been rewarded by experiencing the wonderful relationship of being in Christ, being Christians.

I am so thrilled by what the word of God has done for others, and for me, that I would like to share with you briefly the story of a special friend of mine. I tell you this story with the knowledge that, what God's word has done for others, it can do for you.

Juan Antonio Monroy was born forty-three years ago in Morocco, in North Africa. His mother was a devoutly religious Spanish lady, but his French father was fanatically atheistic. Until he was fourteen, Juan was under the religious influence of his mother and was a regular churchgoer. Then, for the next seven years of his life, he adopted the atheistic ideas of his father.

Juan Monroy was twenty-one when he and a friend attended an evangelistic service conducted by a Cuban preacher. That Friday night sermon developed the theme of the love of God as described in the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians. As a result of that sermon and the conversation which followed with the preacher, Juan became painfully aware of the reality of his own sins. He also became gratefully conscious of the existence of God's love, especially that it could be extended even to include a sinner like himself.

The next day, Saturday, was spent in Bible reading and study, with attendance at the church service and more study with the preacher that night. And, on a Sunday, two days after his first real introduction to the gospel, Juan Monroy became a Christian. He became a Christian because the word of God—the seed—had been planted in his life. It had germinated, grown, and produced the desire for him to obey God by being baptized to have his sins washed away.

On the Sunday that he was baptized, Juan began to share his spiritual treasure with others, and, from that day until now, has given a substantial portion of his life to preaching the gospel. As he preached he continued to develop his other talents and abilities which were also being used to God's glory. Choosing Spanish citizenship and moving to Madrid, he soon established a reputation for being a fine journalist and author. But his personal, spiritual development was also continuing; and he was leading people (including both of his parents) to obey Christ, and was seeing congregations of Christians established.

Christianity Spans the Ocean

The New York World's Fair provided the opportunity, in 1964, for Juan Monroy to make his first visit to the United States. One of his purposes in visiting the World's Fair was to visit the Spanish Pavilion and promote his award-winning book, *The Bible in Don Quixote*. A more important purpose for visiting the United States was to see if he could find other people who shared his understanding of New Testament Christianity.

When he was in the United States recently on one of his now-frequent trips, I asked Juan Monroy, "Before you came to the United States and became acquainted with the churches of Christ, did you know there were any other people in the world who professed to be just New Testament Christians?" I knew that Juan had not been acquainted with any such people, and I was prepared for a negative reply. So, I was a bit startled when Juan quickly replied, "Oh, yes! I knew that there had to be people other than myself who were practicing undenominational, New Testament Christianity!"

Then he explained that, while he did not then have specific knowledge about any such people, he remembered the Lord's promise that His word would not return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11). Whenever and wherever God's word is proclaimed, God makes certain that results are produced. Juan also knew the gospel to be the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11). He knew that if the seed had been planted, in America or anywhere else, it would have produced New Testament Christians. Therefore he came to the United States confident of finding people who, like himself, could be described as Christians only.

When the visitor from Spain saw the sign, "The Churches of Christ Salute You," and the scripture reference where that statement is found—Romans 16:16—he hoped and prayed that he had finally found people like himself. A strong friendship developed between Juan Monroy and T. A. Isaacs, a gospel preacher from New Orleans, who was working as a teacher and counselor at the church's exhibit. Their initial talks ripened into long hours and days of discussion and Bible study. As Monroy, Isaacs, and other Christians continued to study the Bible and share their respective views, they rejoiced to discover that the seed of the kingdom had produced the same understanding in them all.

The Mystery Is Solved

I have often wondered just how this man, living in Africa and later in Europe, could arrive at the same understanding of New Testament Christianity as that held by

his brethren in America, although they did not even know about each other prior to 1964. Yet this is no real mystery. They arrived at the same place in their religious thinking because they were guided by the same book of instructions—the Bible. Their Christian lives are the fruit of the same seed—the word of God.

Suppose that I should divide a package of flower seeds in half, giving one half to Juan Monroy and keeping the other half for myself. If Juan takes his seeds back to Spain and plants them, while I plant in my yard those which I have kept, will we not each enjoy the same kind of flowers? We share the blessing of being in Christ because we are each the products of the implanted word of God (James 1:21). You too can be just a Christian if you will gladly receive the word of God (Acts 2:41, KJV) and pledge yourself to obey His commandments and go where he leads.

Juan Monroy, my brother in the Lord, emphasizes two key words in the life of the Christian. First, he points to Jesus' invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). The key word here is "come." Jesus invites people to come to Him. He gave His life to make that invitation possible. And we are so thankful that all of us have the opportunity to come to Jesus.

The other key word for the Christian is "go." When we come to Christ by obedience to His teaching and enjoy the salvation which He gives, we surely cannot afford to keep such a blessing and treasure just for ourselves. Because He wanted everyone to have the blessings enjoyed by His followers Jesus commissioned them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16).

Juan Monroy has been so grateful for the privilege of coming to Christ that he has channeled all his energies into going to tell others about his Lord. As he has gone everywhere, scattering the precious seed, the harvest has been most rewarding. There are now nineteen congregations of the New Testament church in Spain, worshipping, teaching and serving as God has taught in the Bible.

Believing that the gospel must be communicated before it can be believed and obeyed, Monroy has concentrated on teaching masses of people through radio and literature outreaches. His daily radio broadcast (like this program, it is called Herald of Truth, is heard throughout Spain immediately before the national news. It is impossible to know how many thousands of people are listening, but it

is known that two hundred fifty letters are received each day! These letters come from people who are interested in God and His will, and who are seeking information and help with their personal Bible study.

The monthly magazine, *Restauracion*, is sent to thousands of people in the Spanish-speaking areas of Europe, Africa and the Americas. Incidentally, the term Restoration or Restoration Movement has come to be closely identified with the churches of Christ in the United States. We have emphasized the importance of going back to the Bible and restoring the New Testament church. You have heard us talk on this program about the importance of restoring New Testament Christianity. Therefore I assumed that the magazine took its name from the American Restoration Movement. But Juan explained that the magazine existed before he ever heard of the Restoration in the United States. He chose the name because he felt that the concept of restoring the religion of the New Testament could be described by no other word than the word "restoration."

As a major part of his work of communicating the gospel, Juan Monroy has produced thirty books. Many of these he has translated into Spanish; but he has personally authored twelve books. One of these, entitled *Hombres de Fuego (Men of Fire)*, is a challenge for the church in our time to be filled with evangelistic zeal. It is Juan's belief that God's cause will be advanced only when people are so filled with the spirit of Christ and the gospel that they must share it with others. Juan Monroy is truly what he asks others to be—a man of fire who works tirelessly for our Lord and Master.

PART III: FORWARD AND BACKWARD

In making our plea for people to go back to the Bible and restore the Christianity of the first century, we may sometimes feel a little out of step with modern times. Admittedly it sounds a bit strange to speak of going forward by going backward. Knowing that Juan Monroy faces this same paradox in Spain, I asked him in a recent conversation, "Juan, when you advocate a return to the teachings of the Bible, you are really saying that, in religion we can make progress only by going backward Since this is counter to most everything in our experience, how do you explain to people the necessity of going back to the Bible?"

"Well," Juan said, "It's really very simple. Yesterday a friend and I were riding along in an automobile, and we lost our way. After spending some time trying to find the right way, we decided that we would have to go back to the place where we lost our way." Juan and I share the conviction that people lose their way in religion

when they leave the way chartered by God in the Bible. It makes sense therefore, to go back, re-orient ourselves, find our way again and then proceed to obey and serve God.

There is an Old Testament verse which speaks, in the familiar translations, about asking for the old paths and walking therein. The New English Bible translates the same verse in these challenging and contemporary words: "Stop at the cross-roads; look for the ancient paths; ask, 'Where is the way that leads to what is good?' Then take that way, and you will find rest for yourselves" (Jeremiah 6:16). The people of Jeremiah's time refused to follow the ancient paths, and they suffered the consequences. I believe it is time for all of us to ask for the old paths and to follow them to their destination at the side of God.

I have talked with you about this man of fire, Juan Monroy, because I believe his story is a real inspiration. I do not know anyone whom I admire more. He has taken the Bible as his only guide, and he is helping people in his own land and around the world realize that we need to go back to God, back to the Christ revealed in the Scriptures and back to the church of the Scriptures. He is truly a twentieth century example of the restoration process at work.

May I urge you to imitate the example of this man, even as he is imitating others who have been followers of the Lord. The apostle Paul advised people to imitate him to the extent that he imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). When we all do that we will be Christians, because the same gospel—the seed of the kingdom—will produce the same fruit in the life of each one of us.

I hope you will take your Bible sometime soon and read the Book of Acts. In this book of conversions you will find the stories of several people who were converted to Christ. They were all individuals quite different one from another. They lived in different cities, were of different nationalities, different ages, different backgrounds. Yet, in all these stories of conversion there is a strong thread of continuity.

All of these converts were introduced to Christianity through the preaching of the gospel, God's power to save (Romans 1:16). When the gospel, the seed of the kingdom, was planted in their minds, all these converts believed the good news about God and Christ. They all repented of their sins, confessed their faith in Christ, and were "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:27). When they each obeyed the commands of the gospel they were "added to the church" (Acts 2:47) for which Jesus had given His life (Acts 20:28).

How can such divergent people as a Roman Army officer named Cornelius (Acts 10), a public official from Ethiopia (Acts 8), a merchant woman named Lydia (Acts 16), a jail-keeper in Philippi (Acts 16), a journalist in Madrid, and a person like yourself be brought together in Christ? This is possible only when we are born again “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth” (1 Peter 1:23).

Wouldn't you like to be just a Christian? You can be just a Christian as people have been through nearly twenty centuries, if you will “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

Batsell Barrett Baxter joined the Herald of Truth ministry team in 1959 and for twenty-two years became the most recognized face and voice of the radio and TV programs produced by the Abilene, Texas mass media ministry. During his time with Herald of Truth he also taught at David Lipscomb College and preached for the Hillsboro Church of Christ in Nashville.

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JUAN ANTONIO MONROY

was a Marxist atheist as a young man, but since his conversion his passion has been to tell everyone he meets about Jesus. He has traveled to all of earth's continents except Antarctica and to many of the countries of those continents. He has experienced religious and political persecution and, as a result, helped found what became known as Amnesty International.

Juan Antonio Monroy's footprints are seen around the world. His books, pamphlets, and articles are read in English and Spanish, and his radio programs blanket Europe, the Caribbean, and much of Central and South America.

In this long-awaited autobiography he tells his fascinating story.

- A militant atheist turned Christian evangelist
- Baptized in Morocco, Africa, in 1950 by a Cuban missionary
- Joined the Herald of Truth evangelistic team in 1964
- Presented his first radio broadcast in 1967
- In 1985 became the first minister with Churches of Christ to enter Cuba since the revolution
- Continues to travel and teach at a pace that belies his age of 83

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