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# WHY SPAIN?

**E. STUART BROWN**  
SPANISH GOSPEL MISSION

## **Why Spain, the land of the inquisition?**

*Why go to Spain in 1946, at a time when a foreigner had to report to the police at every place where he spent a night? Why go there with a gospel the mere mention of which identifies you with the enemies of the Franco regime? Why go there when food rationing is inadequate, the inns dirty, and travel can be a nightmare?*

*Why? Because the Lord had said "Who will go for us?" and His people in the country were persecuted, distressed and scattered. But much had to happen before that crucial year, and the book starts with origins.*

# Foreword

When I have mentioned some of my experiences in Spain, especially those that followed the Civil War and the pitiless oppression that emerged from it, people have more than once said to me, "You ought to write a book". This led me to consider such a project and when, through advancing years, my opportunities for travel and ministry began to diminish, I made a start. I had kept a diary since 1921 and I had the back numbers of the magazine of the Spanish Gospel Mission to refer to, so, once I started I soon found plenty of interesting material to share. Looking back through the years, I can discern a pattern of events and coincidences which reveal the guiding hand of God in spite of my wayward tendencies. Why was I given that booklet when I was sixteen? How did a blistered foot prove an introduction to new and most helpful contacts? Why was a clear road to my right the means of saving me from a terrible cycling accident?... And finally, as described in the last chapter. How could a remark on British Television made by an irreligious woman bring great blessings to the inmates of two Spanish prisons?. All these coincidences reveal a Divine hand.

*"With mercy and with judgement  
My web of time He wove  
And aye the dews of sorrow  
Were lustered by His love"*

I cannot end these brief observations without expressing my sincere thanks to Mrs. Iris Shaw of Parkstone, Dorset, for typing out the fair copies of my work, to my son, Dr. Dennis Brown of St. Albans and Mrs. Jean Day of West Dulwich for their help with the punctuation and style of the work. I am also indebted to my nephew, Mr. Godfrey Brown of Gaffyne & Brown Ltd. for, at short notice, undertaking the printing. Then I gladly express my indebtedness to the late Rev. Douglas Hatchard, an esteemed personal friend, at one time pastor of the Stockwell Baptist Church, south London, who, before departing to be "with Christ", left enough finance so that my book could be produced without dipping into the funds of the Spanish Gospel Mission. That unexpected provision came "out of the blue" as we say, and above the "blue" is the risen and glorified Christ.

Finally, if these lines will help to constrain people to surrender their lives to Christ, will quicken interest in the work of the gospel in Spain today, and also make clearer the difference between the true Church and a false one, I shall feel that my labour has not been in vain.

*E. Stuart Brown.*

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# “There is no one to send”

# 1

I did not choose to be a missionary: God called me. I did not choose Spain: He chose it for me. Of course, it was not just one call; it had to be repeated and clarified with the passing of the years.

Certain important events led up to the call. I had the immense privilege of being brought up in a Christian home. I was the second of six children. When we were young we did have our clashes of temperament and our little quarrels, but we had wise and godly parents and I shall never forget the family prayers on Sunday mornings when father prayed for us all, one by one. Mother taught us to pray from our babyhood. When we did wrong we were punished and my conscience always sided with the punisher. Father was a lay preacher with the Methodists and I loved to go with him when he preached at the various churches in the circuit. It was a special treat when he took me on a longer journey by train to a country village where they had no lamp posts and our host carried a lantern as we went to the evening service. I remember when I was perhaps twelve saying to my father: “I am thinking of going in for the ministry”. He replied: “You do not ‘go in’ for the ministry, you are called to it”.

A few weeks before my fourteenth birthday I had a definite experience of conversion. One Sunday night I heard my father preach in the Methodist church we attended on Psalm 8 verse 2. He spoke of the age-long conflict between God and the “enemy and avenger”. He made no specific appeal but I felt that God was saying to me, “On which side are you?”. I had heard at school of someone who, when he had an important decision to make, used a blank sheet of paper and wrote “Pro” on the left hand side and “Con” on the right. He then wrote down all the reasons he could think of on both sides and finally decided by a comparison between the two. I did not have a piece of paper (I believe I was lying in bed) but I asked myself what I could write in favour of being a Christian and what I could put on the contrary side. Being brought up in a Christian home, I had no difficulty in filling the left hand side of the proposition – I would be a worthier son and kinder to my brothers and sisters – but I could not think of one valid reason on the other side. I thought about “being free” and “being happy” but I knew that both were untenable. So there and then I consciously and deliberately yielded my heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ. The next day I had the assurance that He had called me and that I belonged to Him for life.

Some fifteen months later our father decided to leave the Methodist Church where he had been Superintendent of the senior department of the Sunday School and a lay preacher. For years he had felt increasingly dissatisfied with the lack of biblical teaching and preaching among the Methodists. He missed the godly fear and reverence for the written Word of God which characterized Wesley and the earlier preachers. He was indignant at the literary criticism of the Bible which he found in some commentaries and he could not but notice the effect such books were having on the style of preaching. He had heard pastor Fuller Gooch speak at some interdenominational meetings and felt that he was a man after his own heart. So on a certain Sunday in February 1919 the whole family made our appearance at Lansdowne Evangelical Free Church, West Norwood, known then as Lansdowne Hall. The

large building was crowded and we were eventually allocated 8 seats all together right at the front and at right angles to the rest of the congregation. All the church quickly became aware that the Browns had arrived! My elder brother and I were invited to a Bible Class while our sisters soon found their places in the Sunday School. To hear pastor Fuller Gooch preach after the Methodist preachers was like going from prison fare to a banquet! We heard it announced that on the Wednesday evening there would be a "Bible Reading". I went with my father and was agreeably surprised that, instead of reading the Bible all the time, the Pastor gave an impressive exposition on the words, "God is faithful", which I have never forgotten – and not a few times preached it with variations!

It must have been the next year that I first heard about gospel work in Spain. I went with my father to the Saturday night prayer meeting (I wish more Christian young people attended the church prayer meeting these days!) The address that night was given by the Rev. Percy Buffard who some 7 years previously had founded the Spanish Gospel Mission. He spoke of Spain's great need of the gospel and the adventures he had had in trying to take it to the people – the hostility of the priests and frequent obstruction from the local authorities, being nearly mobbed on several occasions, – the abounding poverty and degradation, the dirty inns and hardships of travel (what a "far cry" from the Costa Brava!). My father and I were impressed.

At the end of the meeting Mr. Buffard stood at the door and, as we passed out, he put into my hand a little booklet "Spain and the Gospel", which I read in my bedroom I believe the same night. It declared that Spain was one of the most neglected mission fields in the world. It spoke of the various places where contact had been made and where some one was needed to follow up the good impression made – "BUT THERE IS NO ONE TO SEND!" There was another place where a colporteur had been with the Scriptures and now a preacher was needed – "BUT THERE IS NO ONE TO SEND!" In another place there were some converts who needed a teacher – "BUT THERE IS NO ONE TO SEND!" Those words made such a profound impression on my mind that I lifted my heart in prayer and said, "Lord, if there is no one to send I am willing to go." I feel fairly sure that I would not have responded so readily to a call from India, China or Africa, but Spain seemed less daunting and more within my capabilities. I do not think I told anyone else at the time of my offer; it remained in the back of my mind as I went through the ups and downs of adolescence.

A few weeks after my sixteenth birthday I left school and got a job in a shipping office in the city just over London Bridge. About a year later our father, whose health had been gradually failing, was "called home" and so much had I depended on him for spiritual help that I thought "this is the end of my spiritual life!" But it was nothing of the kind: my "idol" had gone and I had to learn to depend on the One who would never leave me nor forsake me. Because of father's illnesses the family resources had been drained, but mother had a strong faith and the Lord answered our prayers. The church officers paid the funeral expenses and one went further and paid for our house to be redecorated, so that by "squeezing a little" we could let three rooms. I recall something that had happened in the First World War when our father had declared himself a Christian pacifist and said one day in my hearing that he was willing to go to prison for his conscience. I remember saying,

“Oh Daddy! if you go to prison who will look after us?”. “My boy,” he replied “God is able to look after you very much better than I can” (actually he was never called up and he was certainly not A1). His words had a literal fulfilment; for a year after his death the family was certainly in a much better financial situation than during the last years of his life.

Father's death occurred in April 1921 and in August of that year I reached a spiritual crisis. For some weeks I had been slipping spiritually and, although no one knew anything about it, I was in a backsliding condition. One holiday Sunday all the other members of the family were away and I, left alone, went to stay with our aunt at Streatham. I returned to Lansdowne for the morning service. I was far from happy for, to use the words of the prophet, “the hand of the Lord was strong upon me” (Ez.3.14). I did not sit in our usual place but up in the gallery where the children were. I remember we sang “Jesus loves me” and it nearly brought me to tears to think that he still did love me! In the absence of the pastor the pulpit was occupied by the Rev. Peter Rose who often took our pastor's place when he was away. He took as his text God's word to Jacob after his years of backsliding in the house of Laban: “Arise, go up to Bethel (where you first saw the Lord) and dwell there!” (Gen.35.1). It was a powerful message and it cut me to the heart! I returned to my aunt's home and there, in the bedroom I occupied, I poured out my heart to the Lord and I “got back to Bethel”! I returned for the evening service at which I faintly recall a similar message was given, but I shall never forget going back to my aunt's house that evening. I went to the piano and played and sang my heart out! my aunt singing with me. Jesus had said that when the Good Shepherd finds his lost sheep He “lays it on His shoulder REJOICING”. I shall never forget the joy I had that night of being found! That was the beginning of a deeper spiritual experience.

Two months later I was asked if I would take a Sunday School class. The superintendent invited me to his home and gave me a good talk on the importance of the work and what it involved. That task which I continued for seven years was a great blessing. I think I told my little boys (in successive groups) all the principal Bible stories from Genesis to the Acts! I learned more than they did. Six weeks after starting the class I applied to the church for baptism.

It is fascinating to look back and see the Lord's over-ruling in even little things. A very helpful contact came to me through a blistered foot! On a Saturday afternoon I had gone for a long country walk when, because of the blister, I changed my plans and went to a country railway station to catch a train home. On the platform was a middle-aged gentleman who immediately engaged me in conversation. We talked about the beauties of the Surrey countryside until he suddenly asked me, “and where are you going tomorrow?” I told him I would be going to church. He then wanted to know which one, and when I told him Lansdowne Free Church, W. Norwood, the church of Pastor Fuller Gooch, he immediately expressed his approval and fired another question: “Are you a Christian?” I told him of my experience and we found we had much in common. It turned out that he was the secretary of the Insurance and Shipping Christian Union and when I told him that I worked in a shipping office he immediately invited me to the meetings. These were of an evangelistic nature and held in the city just after office hours, preceded by a buffet tea. He also met a small group of young fellows for lunch at a restaurant (I believe weekly) after which they adjourned for a short prayer meeting in the vestry of a city



church. That “chance” encounter opened the way to new friendships and many blessings. The public meetings gave me the opportunity to invite the fellows and girls who worked in the office. During the following years quite a number did attend and hear the gospel and I used to follow up with tracts and conversations. It naturally led to a certain amount of mockery and opposition but I am sure that some were favourably impressed. One young fellow made a profession of faith, but I could never be quite sure where he stood spiritually owing to the influence of the Anglican church he often attended where I do not think the gospel was preached. I recall a wonderful evangelistic rally held by the United Christian unions in the Guildhall and addressed by Mr. Montague Goodman, a Christian solicitor and a fine speaker. Another time there was a rally in the Aldersgate St. Y.M.C.A. addressed by the Rev. Douglas Brown who had had a wonderful campaign in E. Anglia. Another result of that blistered foot was the solution of the problem of where to spend my holidays. I had once gone to stay with some elderly relatives in Ipswich (at least they seemed elderly to me), but though they were very kind I was rather lonely and longed for the company of people of my own age. Of course, I had little cash to spare and a family holiday was in those days out of the question. One day at the midday lunch and prayer meeting I heard some of the young fellows say that they were going to spend their holidays with an evangelist in Sussex connected with the Caravan Mission to Village Children (which later merged with the Scripture Union). I went that year for a week and had such a good time that I continued year after year until my second year in College. The evangelist had a caravan, a large tent for meetings and two smaller ones. The method was to pitch in a field near a village and then invite the local people by handbills which we distributed from door to door. Children were attracted as soon as the big tent was up and we had games for them in the field with a meeting at six and another for adults at 7.30. By this time I had a bicycle so the journey to Sussex was easy. We paid the evangelist £1 per week for our food and helped him with the chores and children’s games, also with the speaking according to our ability. For me it was an excellent training ground as well as a healthy change from city life. I had never heard of a sleeping bag but the evangelist had some camp beds which we put up in the meeting tent. One bank holiday weekend I believe there were six of us. Every Saturday was a free day when, unless the weather was bad, we would cycle to the nearest seaside resort. The evangelist usually had a fortnight’s mission and then moved on to another village. In one small place I recorded that there were eight children and eight adults converted, and I was invited to visit the place again and conduct their Sunday services. Before I left the office I learned that there was an evangelist in Leicester, Mr. Patching, who would be glad of an assistant for a month. I got in touch with him and went to help him between leaving the office and entering college. He was a great blessing to me and that time was an excellent preparation for the future. All this came from one blistered foot!

Now I must go back and take up my story from my baptism and the introduction to Sunday School teaching. I think it was not long after these events when a group of enthusiastic young men began to appear from time to time at our church. C. T. Studd had founded the Heart of African Mission and was leading a new missionary crusade which grew into the W.E.C. (World Evangelization Crusade). For the training of these spiritual “commandos” they had established in Upper Norwood what was known as the “Training Colony” where young men prepared themselves

for a life of hardship and sacrifice in the jungle. From time to time they attended our church and conducted the open air meetings held on Sunday evenings when the weather was not too bad. Their enthusiasm was infectious and it was not long before I gave my first halting testimony in the open air. I remember going for a walk with one of these "Colony boys,, named Victor Evening. I discussed with him a verse that had troubled me – Hebrews 6.6. He quoted John 5.24 and said, "Never put an "if" before a "verily, verily". That good advice has remained with me for fifty years!

With the new enthusiasms engendered by the "Colony Boys" I remembered my earlier offer to go to Spain and I told the Lord that I was willing to go if He wanted me there. The following day I nearly had a serious bicycle accident. I went for a cycle ride in the country, as I often did on Saturday afternoons, and came to the top of a long steep hill with a sharp bend at the bottom and a brick wall facing up the hill. I was going fairly fast when my back brake suddenly broke and I tried in vain to check my pace with both hands on the front brake! I remember the sweat on my brow – suddenly I saw a turning on the right going up hill – providentially there was no traffic to impede my turning right and I quickly came to a halt on the slope! I thanked God for the narrow escape and that night wrote in my diary, "God has spared my life today because He has some service for me to render for Him". Two months later Mr. Buffard came to our church for a second time and I was very impressed by what he said but I did not speak to him personally about my inward thoughts. That was in 1922 and my widowed mother, with seven mouths to feed, still needed my help. However, I did write for the Mission magazine so as to keep in touch with the work. It was at about this time, as far as I can remember, that I broke the news to mother about my earlier call to Spain, and she said that when the time came she would never put any hindrance in my way, the great thing was to be quite sure of the Lord's will. In October 1923 I felt burdened about the need in Spain as I read the Mission magazine, and again I told the Lord that I was willing to go if He made it quite clear.

About a month later my heart "gave a jump" when I heard on a certain Saturday that Mr. Buffard was coming to preach at our church the following morning. I thought to myself: "I wonder what he will say?" I listened with all ears until he suddenly came out with "I am praying for a young man". I bowed my head and worshipped, and immediately spoke to him at the conclusion of the service and had a longer conversation in the afternoon. I was then a thin pale youth and one of the first things he said was: "I think you ought to see a doctor!" He questioned me as to whether I had ever won a soul to Christ and I told him of my various evangelistic efforts in the Sunday School, in the open air meetings and in the office. He gave me some good advice as to how to prepare myself. In due course I got an appointment with a Christian doctor and he would not pass me at first. I had to return to him a month or two later and then he said "I would not pass you for the tropics but I should think you could go to Spain". In those days Spain was a long way behind most European countries in matters of health and hygiene. From that time on I kept in touch with Mr. Buffard by correspondence.

Another year passed and I learned that in Spurgeon's College there was a student preparing to join Mr. Buffard's work; so I went to see him. He had already visited Spain so he had a good deal to tell me. But when I learnt that at Spurgeon's they

studied Latin, Greek and Hebrew I remembered my poor school reports and said to myself: "That is not the place for me!" I really wondered whether I was capable of being a missionary at all and that night I prayed for some confirmation and next day the Lord answered. I was in the habit of reading from my pocket New Testament a verse or two a day at my lunch hour. That day I arrived at Gal. 1.15-16: "When it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the heathen immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood". The Holy Spirit applied that to my heart and I felt re-assured. In a week or two I visited the All Nations Bible College, in Upper Norwood not far from Spurgeon's. I found that the courses did not seem so stiff so I imagined that that would be the Lord's choice for me.

Some months later, while working at the office, I was very surprised to see Percy Buffard walk in. He asked if I could get time off to have a chat. When I told the head of the department that a friend from abroad had come to see me he readily gave me leave. In that half an hour's conversation all my provisional plans came tumbling down! He assured me that I needed a thorough training and he could think of no better place than Spurgeon's College. By this time my mother told me that she could spare me if I felt guided to start my training for Spain. I then approached the pastor of our church, the Rev. George Harper, pastor Fuller Gooch having retired. He gave me every encouragement, so I applied to Spurgeon's in December 1925, hoping to enter in September 1926. But I did not get in, which I realized later was providential.

Among the opportunities for Christian service which came my way was a mission in the East End of London where I saw little children with bare feet! When I told my good friends at the mission that I was applying for a four years' training to go to Spain, they assured me that I would never get there for the Lord would come again first! I replied that if He did He would find me trying to serve Him and preparing for a more important ministry. In those days the interest in the Second Coming of Christ had been rekindled by the epoch-making events of the "Balfour Declaration" and the return of the Jews to Palestine after so many centuries of wandering.

In 1926 came the General Strike. I cycled up to business and helped to unload oranges at the docks. In the crisis the students came to the aid of the government by driving trains and manning buses; people joked about the polished "Oxford accent" of the new bus conductors! During the summer of that year our youth leaders organized an impressive series of open air meetings, two a week, and I found my place among the panel of speakers. There was no lack of helpers and we had some good times. In some of these meetings there was an appeal made for personal testimonies and I am surprised to read in my diary of the many who responded, girls as well as young fellows and older people. We had a fine band of young people in those days and on Saturday afternoons we would sometimes cycle out to such villages as Chipsted, Banstead and Woodmansterne, meet others who had gone by train and "rambled", have tea all together and then hold an open air meeting, I remember one such meeting in Green Street Green when, by the providence of God, we joined with two other church groups and had a splendid meeting.

Old and young collaborated together and there was much blessing. So much so that Satan decided to stir up trouble in the church as he tried to do after Pentecost. One important lesson for young Christians is not to be offended when that happens. In the autumn of that year we became aware of a sad difference of opinion bet-

ween the pastor and the church officers. Meanwhile I heard nothing from Spurgeon's College and another group of men entered in September.

In the spring of 1927 I had a message from the college asking whether I had received the candidates schedule they had sent me and when I was going to send it back? I telephoned the Secretary informing him that I had received nothing from them. He replied, "I will put it in the post at once, be as quick as you can in dealing with it." I only had a fortnight before the College Council was to meet and choose the students to enter in September. I was surprised at the length of the schedule. It included a long list of personal questions and requested a recommendation from my church, a medical report and a recent photograph. One important clause read, "the cost of your training will be £50 per year for 4 years, what can your church and friends contribute towards this amount?" I decided that I would not ask anyone for financial help, but fortunately for me the schedule had to be countersigned by the pastor and the Church Secretary. After that, events moved quickly. I received a letter from the Church Secretary offering help, and another from the Sunday School. At a Communion Service the pastor asked the members to ratify my application. Providentially I met an old friend of my father's on a railway platform. He asked about my mother and the family and I told him of my hopes of entering college to be a missionary in Spain. I did not mention money but he immediately said: "I am very glad to hear that, my boy, send me a card every term and I will send you £5". These offers did not quite meet the full amount needed, but one of the church officers spoke to me on the Sunday night and offered to make up whatever was lacking up to the £50 per year! I had an interview with the college council and soon learned of my acceptance. I found out that there had been 50 applicants for 11 vacancies. How glad I was that the first schedule had been lost so that the Lord could show me that He could deal with any emergency! Spain seemed a long way off but the next step was as clear as daylight! That happened in the March of 1927 and by May the pastor had left and some of my friends left with him! In September I entered college and as my home was only about 2 miles away they asked me to live at home for the first two years and paid my mother to keep me! So wonderfully had the Lord provided!

College life was very stimulating and, although the studies were not easy, I soon found that I could keep a place above the average. I found note-taking difficult, as I am a slow writer, so I evolved my own short-hand for many of the common words – a device which has, during the years, saved me hours and hours of labour. My first sermon at the sermon-class was mercilessly torn to shreds, which upset me at the time, my name beginning with B I did not have much time to hear what happened to other people's sermons. Later I saw that the criticisms tended to be rather jocular and irresponsible – a weakness which I understand has been remedied since. Opportunities for preaching gradually increased and I greatly enjoyed the hospitality often provided.

Towards the end of my second year I learned that a little church in Alder Road, Bournemouth, had written for a student-pastor and the Principal had chosen five of us to go in turn. I was the first to go and after about six weeks I received the invitation to undertake the task. The church was an "outreach" effort of the Westcliffe Baptist Church and I worked under the supervision of the pastor. When I went the church had no morning service, so I attended Westcliffe in the morning and then I had charge of the Sunday School and evening service at Alder Road. I entered with

zest into my new responsibilities. It was arranged that I should remain at Bournemouth on Monday, do study in the morning, visiting in the afternoon and return to college in the evening. In term time I was only to go twice a month so as not to detract too much from my studies.

After about six months of my Bournemouth ministry I came to a first class crisis – in short, I lost my heart to one of the young lady Sunday School teachers. Her name was Doris Giles and I feared that she would not be able or willing to be a missionary! Just at that time I read about Dr. Barnado who originally felt called to China and then stayed in England and did his great work among the orphans. One evening over supper I happened to remark that I was not quite certain of going to Spain at all! One of my fellow students with whom I was very friendly looked me full in the face and said: “Stuart, I am very surprised to hear you say that: you had the clearest call of any of us!” That rebuke sent me to my room in distress of soul and I told the Lord that I would put Him first whatever the cost. I wrote to the young lady and put everything as plainly as I could. My letter came as a great surprise to her for I had not clearly expressed any special feelings for her.

When we met she seemed favourable. On the Sunday night we had a long talk when I explained what was involved in being a missionary. She was appalled! and as we parted she said, with the frankness which always characterized her: “I can’t be a missionary, I am too selfish!” That shook me, I did not sleep well that night, and study was difficult on the Monday morning. But in the evening I found her waiting for me at the railway station to say that she thought it would be all right. Her parents who attended Alder Road put nothing in our way, but her father said he did not think she was cut out to be a missionary. How wrong he was after-events proved. God had made no mistake. As our friendship deepened I told her that we could not be engaged until she had been passed by a doctor for training as a missionary. I shall never forget the night before she was to have her medical examination. Her mother said to me: “Stuart, whatever will you do if she does not pass?” I said that I felt sure that we were being guided and that all would be well. But as I went up to bed her words troubled me. My mind was a blank as I turned over the pages of my Bible, trying to remember what portion I should read. Suddenly I found myself looking at these words, “Jesus answered him saying, fear not, believe only and she shall be made whole” (Luke 8.50) I do not believe that we should make a habit of opening the Bible at random in order to receive guidance, but I know that the Lord reassured me that night and I told the family the next morning. As it turned out, her doctor said, as another doctor had said about me: “I would not pass you for the tropics but for the land of Spain you’ll do”. The promise given me that night buoyed me up on many future occasions, for, before her training was finished, she had lost nearly a whole term through ill-health. Looking back, I praised the Lord that he had not allowed me to enter college when I first applied. Had I done so I would not have been eligible for the student-pastorate at Bournemouth with all its happy consequences!

When our engagement became known, the other students who had been to Bournemouth expressed great surprise that a young man so serious should be attracted to a girl so vivacious, but God knew that she had what I lacked. Six months after we were engaged she entered Mount Hermon Missionary Training College at Streatham which was conveniently near my home and my college.

The work at Alder Road was encouraging. Although I only went twice a month in term time, I was able to do more in the vacations - both in week-night meetings and visitation. We had about eighty children in the Sunday School and an average of forty at the Sunday evening service. Of course the district was not nearly so populous as it is today. My "parish" consisted of only about a half a dozen short roads, there was only one shop and much common land. There was even a light railway connected with the clay pits which crossed Alder Road just close to the church. After I had been there about eight months we started a morning service, so I had a very busy Sunday.

In July 1931 I finished my course at Spurgeon's College and the following September I said "Farewell" to the little church where I had worked so happily among young and old. At Mr. Buffard's recommendation I took a three months medical course at the Missionary School of Medicine connected with the Homeopathic Hospital at Great Ormond Street, but I am afraid I did not learn enough in such a short time to be of much use. Also conditions in Spain had changed. At one time Mr. Buffard had practised as an unofficial homeopathic doctor and had had some remarkable cures, but the local doctors took action and he had to close his clinic. In January 1932 I had a Valedictory and Ordination service at Lansdowne Evangelical Free Church, where I had been baptized. To that Church I owe a debt I can never repay: there I received my early Christian training, they supported me in my college days - and still do after all these years! At the end of January I left by train for Spain: Doris was to follow me in the autumn after finishing her course at Mount Hermon Missionary Training College.

# Missionary with an “L Plate” 2

I had taken a nine months beginner’s course in Spanish during my last year in college so I was not quite helpless when I finally arrived at the Madrid railway station. I was met by two young Spanish evangelists whom I spotted at the barrier holding up Bibles in their hands. They did not know a word of English and when they asked me whether I had any registered luggage I did not know what they were talking about! However, we got on well together and, after a delay in collecting their car from a garage, we set off southwards towards Valdepeñas.

About midday we arrived at Aranjuez where we strolled around the market – everything was new and very interesting to me. In due time they bought some fish, bread and fruit and took it to a little kitchen adjoining the market where a woman cooked the fish for us and let us eat it in a room close by. At six o’clock we arrived at Valdepeñas and I was *very* glad to hear an English voice. Mr. Buffard took me to the Mission hostel where I was to stay and I received a warm welcome from all. That night I was introduced to the church at their well-attended prayer meeting. I responded in English through Mr. Buffard’s interpretation but managed to finish up with John 3.16 in Spanish.

Some young missionaries have found themselves pitchforked into an alien environment and obliged to share a home with people of greatly differing tastes and temperament, but I was let down very lightly. At the hostel there were three middle-aged lady missionaries in residence and frequent visitors. All were very friendly and I was made to feel at home. Mr. and Mrs. Buffard lived a few streets away and I found him from the word “go” a very considerate leader. My first Sunday coincided with a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Norton of the Belgian Gospel Mission and I enjoyed his messages in English before they were interpreted by Mr. Buffard. Many of the hymns were interpretations from English and sung to the same tunes, so I could guess a good deal of what I did not understand. At the end of the day I was invited to have supper with Mr. and Mrs. Buffard and Mr. and Mrs. Norton and that made my day!

For a few weeks I had the pleasant company of a young prospective missionary from Switzerland who was learning the language like myself. Although it was February I found that at certain times of the day it was often possible to sit in the warm sunshine of the patio while wrestling with irregular verbs and unfamiliar phrases. But the house with its tiled floors and thick walls was built to withstand heat rather than cold, so for much of my time I studied and wrote letters in my bedroom wearing my thick overcoat and with mittens on my hands. Everything was new and interesting and I soon settled down in my new environment.

I remember the thrill of receiving my first letter from home; my mother said that the separation had been “terrible” and I realized that she also had her share in the sacrifice for the Lord’s work. In those days very few people thought of going to Spain for their holidays, there were no flights, and Spain seemed as far away as Tibet does today.

Spain in 1932 was going through a difficult period of transition with many growing pains. The earlier dictatorship of Primo de Rivera had increased the strangle-

hold of the Roman Church and thwarted all desire for more liberty. In the previous April an election had been held in which so many republican votes were cast that King Alfonso fled the country, there was no bloodshed and a democratic republic was declared with much rejoicing, especially among the very numerous poorer classes. A law of religious liberty was soon passed, opening the door to the greatest freedom for preaching the gospel that Spain had ever known.

With the heavy hand of the Roman Church lifted, there was a natural reaction against that church and some of its buildings were burnt down. But, as the overwhelming majority of the people had no knowledge of any other form of Christianity, their tendency was to throw off all forms of religious belief. It was reported that when military attendance at Mass became voluntary instead of compulsory, in one barracks, only one soldier attended out of six hundred, and in a prison, only three out of eight hundred attended.

At that time the Roman Church in Spain was tyrannical and riddled with superstitious practices, far worse than anything that can be seen today. There were hundreds of different images of the Virgin competing for the devotion of the people. Being at that time so isolated from the rest of Europe (\*), and with so little biblical Christianity within her borders, she was nearer the Middle Ages in her beliefs and practices than to the Catholic Church of Vatican II.

I arrived in time to see the great efforts being made by the workers of the Mission to make the most of the new liberties granted. As soon as I knew a little of the language I accompanied (as a learner) some of the Spanish evangelists on their evangelistic tours. Usually our men were well received by the local authorities and the Labour club was put at our disposal for meetings. I remember one small place where our meeting was announced by the town crier with his bell.

We got the crowds, but it was not easy to get them to listen to the gospel. They had seen so much religion associated with tyranny and oppression that the mere name of "God" was sufficient to alienate them, and it was only the most skilful of our preachers who could hold their attention. Frequently the address came to an abrupt end because no one was listening. Then gospel literature would be offered, private conversations would take the place of preaching and sometimes another meeting would be announced for the following night for those really interested. This would usually attract less than a tenth of the original crowd.

We had one Spanish evangelist named Miguel Aguilera who, more than anyone I met, knew how to handle the type of crowd we got in those days. He was a born leader. As a youth he was the ringleader of a gang. They once filled their pockets with small stones and entered a house where a gospel meeting was to be held. Their plan was at a signal from him, to throw their stones at the unfortunate preacher and then rush out, but so many people came afterwards and blocked the doorway that they felt trapped and then, to their utter astonishment, they heard the preacher read from a book "He that is without sin among you cast the first stone!" (John 8.7) At the end they confessed their plot to the preacher and later he was converted. He was married with a large family by the time I arrived in Spain. I once heard him speak in a Labour club in Valencia. The place was crowded, with very few believers pre-

(\*)Footnote: I heard a Spanish university professor say to a group of foreign students, "You will never understand Spain unless you realize that Africa begins at the Pyrenees!"



sent. He started with social justice and ended up with Calvary! You could have heard a pin drop and he spoke for over an hour! He had up his sleeve a lot of stories and illustrations which he knew how to employ with telling effect.

I learned that on one occasion he had an opportunity to address a huge crowd in a bull-ring, many of them communists. The convenor of the meeting warned him that if he mentioned religion he might be stoned. He started with a challenge: "I have been told that if I mention religion I will be stoned. Get your stones ready for I cannot speak of anything else! You don't know what real religion is; you only know the tyrannical system of the priests; Jesus Christ was a friend of the poor!" When he sat down there was a round of applause

The handful of gospel preachers worked hard and sowed the good seed of the gospel as widely as they could, but the harvest was small. The masses of poor people had been given political liberty for the first time in their lives and they were not interested in their souls. They wanted to hear about wages and prices and trade unions. Many could not read or write. Near the mission-house in Valdepeñas there was a barber's shop and every fine morning I used to see a crowd of men gathered outside the door, some on chairs from the shop, listening to a man reading a newspaper.

The fact is that the people were not ready for democracy; they were incapable of understanding how difficult it was for the republican government to reverse the system of the centuries and grant them a larger share in the good things of life. They far outnumbered the small wealthy class associated with the army and the church, but there was only a very small middle class to give balance to the situation and make democracy work. Then the government, influenced by the popular reaction, dared to disestablish the Roman Catholic Church, and from that time the clerical hierarchy began to plot the destruction of the Republic. In view of these factors it is remarkable that the Republic did last for five years.

I recall one experience of Roman Catholic opposition to the gospel. On a journey to a small town our evangelists had obtained permission from the mayor to hold an open air meeting in the main square. What we did not know was that he afterwards gave permission to the priest to have a procession at the same time. Our meeting had scarcely got under way when the square was invaded by the people of the procession, mostly women, who shouted and screamed until the meeting was broken up and, as we retreated in two cars, a shower of stones came pattering on the roof. I was in the second car and after a few minutes our lights failed: we had to crawl along at a snail's pace on a winding mountain road, arriving at our base for the night in the early hours of the morning! Next day I accompanied one of the evangelists as he went to see the provincial Governor to complain at the imprudence of the mayor in allowing the priest to have his procession at the same time as our meeting. I was impressed with the very courteous and sympathetic reception we had from the Governor, he promised to reprimand the mayor.

I worked hard at language study and fortunately I liked it. But I did have periods of discouragement. The people seemed to gabble so! After I had been there about nine weeks I was told that it was my turn to speak at the weekly meeting of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour. For my five minute contribution I was given a very appropriate text: "God hath chosen the weak things of the world" (1 Cor.1.27).

In those early days in the country I was greatly helped by the friendship of one of

the young evangelists and his wife who were both better educated than the rank and file of the Valdepeñas congregation. They frequently invited me to spend an evening with them just to chat and be corrected whenever I made a mistake. All my first address notes were corrected by him and he never failed to tell me if I made a “faux pas”, which the other Spaniards were too polite to do. This was excellent and prevented my forming incorrect habits of speech. At that time his main work was postal evangelism. Mr. Buffard had obtained the names and addresses of the national schoolmasters and school mistresses, doctors and lawyers and to them gospels and tracts were sent with an offer of a New Testament to all who would write for it. While we chatted I helped him put the tracts in the envelopes, stick on the labels and take them to the post. For this work the Scripture Gift Mission had sent us liberal supplies of Scriptures. A few months after my arrival Mr. Buffard reported that seventy thousand tracts and gospels had been circulated and many people had written for New Testaments. I have vivid recollections of a short journey I had with that young man when I had my first experience of the fleas and bugs in the country inns, as well as an uncomfortable stage in a springless cart!

Some seven months after my arrival in Spain my fiancée arrived in the company of a Christian woman (a writer of children’s books) who wanted to see the country. I was able to meet them off the train in Madrid and bring them to Valdepeñas. In those days Spanish etiquette did not allow of engaged couples walking about unaccompanied, so we were very grateful for the presence of this lady who acted as a chaperon as I took Doris round to see the town and its surrounding countryside. How times have changed since then!

Soon after that Mr. Buffard dropped a “bomb shell”. He wanted me, almost immediately, to go to Madrid University to take a two months foreigners course. To us it seemed hard, but we accepted the wisdom behind it. (How glad I am that we had been taught from childhood to obey rather than “express ourselves”!) I had been in the country seven months and had reached a stage when I could profit from the lectures. Afterwards I was always grateful for that experience. I had an excellent introduction to the culture of the country which would help me during all my future work. (Mr. Buffard was not a hard man and when he went to Madrid he kindly took Doris with him to give me a wonderful surprise!) In the University I was introduced to Spanish literature, art, music, history and politics and that enabled me from that time on to have a sensible conversation with an educated Spaniard.

In my two months in Madrid I had the agreeable company of the Swiss young fellow who had previously spent some weeks with me in the Mission hostel on my first arrival in the country. We got lodgings with a woman living in a street called “the Holy Spirit”. Our landlady was nice and we fortunately made a good impression on her before she discovered that we were Protestants! She told us afterwards that if we had let her know our faith on arrival she would have shut the door on us. She soon became very friendly and she realized that Protestants were not criminals! There were three Spanish students lodging there with whom we had some furious arguments. They had the advantage of greater facility in the language while we had superior knowledge of what we were talking about. Before the end of our stay they all became more friendly and went with us to hear the gospel, as did several other students we had contacted, including an American. Using tracts and gospels we were able to talk to the maid, the grandmother of our hostess and several visitors

who put in an appearance from time to time. All seemed very surprised to learn what we Protestants believed – so different from what they had heard.

During my two months stay in the capital I made myself familiar with its most attractive buildings, its underground “Metro” network, its parks and the shops of its central suburbs. It was a fine city, more attractive I think than it is now and much less choked up with traffic and crowds. At that time its population was under a million, now it is over three million. I visited the six evangelical churches there and obtained some idea of its denominational set-up. My Swiss friend and I mostly attended the Presbyterian Church which was nearer to our lodgings, but we preferred the Brethren Assembly for introducing our fellow-students to the gospel. In December it became surprisingly cold and I discovered the reason – the wind was coming from the snowy Guadarrama mountains in the North West. More than once while I was there there were student riots – though not where we were – and the university was closed for a few days.

Before Christmas I was back in Valdepeñas, staying in the hostel while Doris had moved to the home of Mr. & Mrs. Buffard a few streets away. We disciplined ourselves never to be seen walking out together without a chaperon, while on one occasion I was asked to escort a Spanish girl to her home! But within the Buffard’s home we were given every facility and I took on the happy task of teaching Doris Spanish. Within a few months a new problem presented itself. Mr. & Mrs. Buffard were planning to go to England and the Spaniards would not consider it proper for us to be together at the hostel. Mr. Buffard suggested sending Doris to Alcazar, some 60 miles north, to stay with Miss Wilson and Miss Dadd. I suggested that we got married!

In those days many missions had strict rules about such matters. It was considered unwise for a girl to take on the responsibilities of marriage and a home until she had been on the field sufficient time to learn the language, usually reckoned as a year. However, I asked if we could, after being married, remain for three months in the hostel so that Doris would not have the labour of cooking and house-work. The ladies at the hostel readily agreed to this suggestion, but my diary says that Mr. Buffard did not finally give his permission until he had consulted with the Chairman and Secretary of the Home Council. How things have changed!

Preparations did not take many weeks. The only place where we could be legally married was at the British Consulate in Madrid and Mr. Buffard kindly offered to take us there in his car and arrange with the Brethren missionaries to hold a marriage service in their hall following on the official ceremony. None of our relatives or friends from England could be there, but that did not worry us. We were married in English and Spanish, by law and grace, and the Madrid friends were exceedingly kind. That was in March, and after a few days we returned with the Buffards to Valdepeñas, promising ourselves a longer holiday in May at Valencia by the sea.

I continued to give Doris her Spanish lessons and she made excellent progress, partly because she was not too shy to talk. Once I had taught her the grammar she picked up the rest chatting with the Spanish women. After our three months at the hostel Mr. Buffard had thought of sending us to join a young Spanish couple and open up new work in the province of Valencia. We had visited this couple after our holiday. They were the ones who had helped me so much with the language in my early days and they had done the same for Doris, especially when I was in Madrid.

However, all these plans had to be revised when Mrs. Buffard had a serious break-

down in health and had to be taken first to Switzerland and then to England. In this situation Mr. Buffard felt that our presence was needed in Valdepeñas for the oversight of the work, so he offered us to live in their home. I was already Field Treasurer and now an important part of my work had to be administration. From the beginning it had been impressed upon me that the most effective evangelism was done by the Spaniards themselves because the priests had taught the people that no true Spaniard could be a Protestant: so my ministry developed on the line of Bible teaching, while Doris was soon able to take a Sunday School class and speak at the Women's meeting.

Besides the local work we used to take frequent journeys to visit the churches, where I would conduct a series of simple Bible studies. I had by now learned to drive and Doris had got a licence in England (without a test!). In those days one of the hazards on the roads was the unpredictable behaviour of the donkeys and mules, especially the baby ones that used to follow their mothers without being harnessed in any way. We very often had trouble in getting the mission car to start, especially in the winter, and the breakdowns were frequent. On cold nights we would empty the radiator and then in the morning fill up with hot water. I remember seeing an evangelist take out the sparking plugs, put them on rags soaked in petrol, ignite the rags and replace the plugs hot! If you passed a car stopped on the road it was etiquette to ask whether the occupants needed any help. Another memory which I am glad to say is long out of date is the vermin at the inns where we often had to spend the night. We always went armed with insect powder but had many disturbed nights. I remember once in a Bible class with a group of our young people a girl removed an insect from my collar!

The year after we were married I was asked to take Mr. Buffard's place on a journey of a thousand miles in north Spain – he was often hindered by ill health. Two young missionaries belonging to another mission, still mere beginners in the language, wanted to see the neediest part of the country with the possibility of eventually starting work there, and Mr. Buffard had agreed to take them to the Basque provinces. I had to drive and do most of the speaking as opportunity offered. It was winter time and in one mountain pass the snow was heaped up higher than the little car! In another pass we slithered about and were brought to a halt until the mountain patrol came bringing chains to put on the wheels.

We visited some small struggling churches in that very difficult area and did our best to inspire and encourage them in their witness. One of my companions could play the violin well; I accompanied him with a concertina and the music proved an attraction wherever we went. We visited Burgos and found it a veritable stronghold of Romanism; it seemed to be swarming with priests, monks and nuns. We had a special interest in visiting a village some twelve miles away called Mozoncillos where Mr. Buffard had heard of some lonely believers. On arriving at the village we began distributing gospels and soon got in touch with the people we were seeking. They were a man named Miguel and his wife. They had borne a brave testimony for twenty years, more than once having to suffer persecution and at least on one occasion being threatened with physical violence. Their four sons had in time been converted and had since left home to settle in Barcelona. It was not possible to have a meeting that day, so we left promising to return on the morrow.

We drove to a quiet place to rest and study and there came across a shepherd to

whom we gave a gospel and spoke of the Good Shepherd who gave His life for us. The man seemed interested. The following day we met the shepherd on our way to Mozoncillos, he signalled to us to stop and told us that he had spoken about us to others in his village and many wanted to hear what we had to say. This was a challenge for which we felt very inadequate and wished there had been a Spanish evangelist within call. However, we went to the village and found some men waiting for us: there was no mistaking their interest. They said that if we could return at night there would be a hall at our disposal for a meeting! We were much cast on the Lord as we had no idea of what kind of a reception we would get when they realized we did not belong to "Holy Mother Church"!

After visiting our friends, and having a nice friendly meeting with ten people we set off to meet the unexpected challenge. We found some 20 men waiting for us in the road; we entered the small hall and soon there were about 60 gathered together, all men. We started playing and singing choruses and explaining their meaning; then the Lord helped me to preach. I had to make it clear that salvation could not be obtained by going to Mass or making a vow but, only, as the Lord and His apostles taught, by repenting of our sins and trusting in the Saviour who died to save us. There was not a word of protest; the silence was absolute! They gladly received tracts and gospels at the end, and we left them feeling immensely relieved that all had gone so much better than we had feared, but sad to think that it might be a *very* long time before they could hear the gospel again.

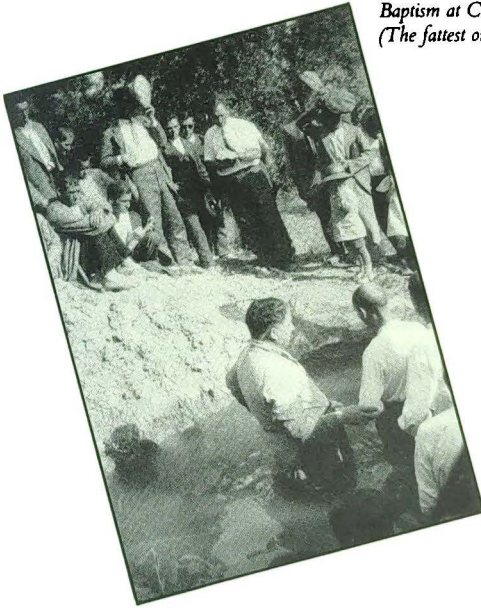
Time passed and my wife and I became increasingly involved in the Mission's various activities. Mrs. Buffard improved in health and returned with her husband to Valdepenas. All their children were in England so they divided their house into two flats and we had the bottom one. It was a pleasure and privilege to have fellowship with them. In due course we had, in 1935, our first furlough in England. My wife had to take things very quietly, owing to what was called a "tired heart", but I travelled widely taking deputation meetings. Some missionaries have found this rather trying, almost frustrating, but on the whole I enjoyed it. After five months Doris had recovered and we returned to our flat in Valdepeñas.

In the spring of 1936 Mr. Buffard organized an important inter-denominational convention in the Escorial near Madrid; the venue was a hotel not far from the palace-monastery built by King Philip II after the failure of the Spanish Armada. The principal speakers were Miss Ruth Paxson and Miss Edith Davies who had already held some impressive meetings in Valdepeñas 2 years earlier. They had worked for years with the China Inland Mission and Miss Paxson had taken part in conventions in Switzerland and elsewhere. Mr. Buffard himself acted as a very effective interpreter and also delivered the morning devotional addresses which were of deep spiritual value. All the members of the Mission attended, both nationals and foreign missionaries, and there was a total of sixty six altogether, including pastors and Christian workers of all the principal evangelical denominations working in the country. It was a great pleasure for us to meet so many fellow-workers from other parts of Spain, but it was not that which made these days stand out in my memory. The chief speakers were uncommonly gifted, but neither was it that which made the Convention so wonderful. It was just this: that there we met God! We had a new vision of His holiness and a new sense of our own unworthiness. At the same time we were dazzled by the riches of the resources revealed to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Some saw for the first time the great need of revival. Many

of us saw things in our own lives which were hindering the full blessing God wished to give us. Faults were confessed (I had to write two letters of apology), misunderstandings put right, lives were cleansed and surrendered. When that happens revival begins. At the last meeting all but three or four gave testimonies to blessing received.

In the hotel it was interesting to note the effect gradually produced by our presence on the manager and staff. At first, the latter showed a little amusement at the "grace" said at meals, but their attitude gradually changed and towards the end they grew more attentive and friendly. Several were introduced to the gospel through personal conversation with their guests. At the end the Manager said that he had never had such a party in his hotel and he would welcome us again at any time, even if it involved financial sacrifice! On the last day we presented him with a beautifully bound Bible; Bibles were also given to the waiters and maids, some of whom had already begun to show interest.

That memorable convention was, we hoped, a preparation for a great advance in the work of the gospel in Spain, but God knew that for some it was a preparation for martyrdom and for all, the prelude to a devastating attack on the work of the gospel they were trying to do. Who could have dreamed that it would be thirty years before the little evangelical churches would again enjoy a modicum of liberty?



*Baptism at Chelana Senor Aguilera Evangelist  
(The fattest one!)*



*The young missionaries*

In the early spring of 1936, while we were enjoying the wonderful convention described in the last chapter, the political situation of the country was becoming increasingly chaotic. People had become disillusioned because the politicians could not find a solution for the many problems that faced them. There was still much unemployment and poverty. There were too many political parties and they could not agree among themselves. There was intrigue and utter selfishness and the clerical party were still plotting the destruction of the Republic. They got all the votes they could by bringing out the enclosed orders from monasteries and convents. Nearly all the hospitals were in their power, so all patients who could walk or be carried were brought out to vote as directed. Mr. Buffard wrote, "Here in Valdepeñas the devout Catholic ladies were offering clothing, shoes and blankets to all who would confess to the priest and vote as he directed." These manoeuvres provoked bitter resentment. By such means the clerical party had been in power for some months but they did not dare to attempt to change the Constitution of the Republic for fear of a popular uprising. The measures they did take had provoked a revolution in Asturias in the north, which was only put down by months of fighting.

Then in the February of 1936 there had been an election when the anti-clerical parties gained a slight majority, but few seemed satisfied. In the general frustration people were veering to the extreme left and the extreme right. That was dangerous. There were communists and even more anarchists; then there was the influence of Italian Fascism and German Nazism which had produced similar movements in Spain. The newly elected government was democratic, put in by the votes of the majority, but it was weak and "sitting on a powder keg"! Many people realized that the country really needed a strong hand and the powerful minority groups – the army, the church, the wealthy and the fascists – closed their ranks under the leadership of General Franco, the man chosen to raise the standard of revolt and batter down all opposition by force of arms. It was easy to say they were saving the country from communism, but the government was certainly not communist. We could concede, perhaps, that they saved the nation from chaos – but at a terrible price of blood!

The blow was struck on Saturday, July 18th. Franco brought his Moorish troops over from North Africa, and the garrisons in Seville, Burgos and many other places revolted. They expected a "walk over". The democratic government was hamstrung because it did not know whom it could trust. It was opposed by nearly all the army, and was not sure of the civil guard or the police, so the government armed the young men of the Republican and Socialist parties while in some places communists or anarchists just took over. Apart from in those places, the evangelicals were respected, though all public meetings were banned. On Franco's side it was soon made clear that there was no place for Protestants in the "New Spain" they were fighting to impose. Of course it was not new, it was a return to the old national traditions connected with the Roman Catholic Church and the "Holy Office" of the Inquisition!

We were in Valdepeñas when the blow was struck. Mr. & Mrs. Buffard had left

for England six weeks earlier. On the Sunday we had planned to visit the Santa Cruz church, 11 miles away, for a baptismal service in the evening. I soon found that I had to get a permit from the Mayor to do that journey. There was no difficulty about that, for the Mayor knew us and was friendly. The priests went into hiding and the local authorities took over the church buildings – in some of which they found arms and ammunition. We had a quiet morning service in the little hall within the high wall of the mission-house and felt the presence of the Lord. In the afternoon we went to Santa Cruz and found that our friends had postponed the baptism on account of the “state of emergency” declared by the authorities. We did, however, hold a meeting and I was greatly helped in giving an unprepared message. On returning in the little car at night, we were stopped at the entrance of Valdepeñas by a group of young men armed with pistols and other weapons. They ordered us out of the car, and one chap had his pistol pointing right at my head, though they never touched Doris. They were not belligerent, but looked inside the car. I showed them the Mayor’s permit and they finally gave us the Spanish equivalent of “Pass friend, all is well!” That was the beginning.

There followed days of tension and alternate hopes and fears. We had an advantage in being able to get reliable news through the B.B.C. broadcasts. We learned that Malaga and Seville had fallen to the fascists and there was fighting in Cordoba. Franco declared that he had four columns advancing on Madrid from different directions and a fifth column waiting in the capital to rise up and help him when the time came. Ever since then, the words “fifth column” have had a new and sinister significance. We held some meetings, but the attendances were small and there was much fear. We heard of the arrest of people suspected of being on the other side. We also heard of a man who shot another out of personal spite. The Mayor had him arrested and said he would have liked to have him shot in the public square as a warning to others. He tried hard to be just and fair. We heard that in other places there was far more cruelty, and it was said that the authorities of the neighbouring town of Manzanares wanted to come to Valdepeñas and impose harsher measures in our town. I believe our authorities were more lenient as a result of a New Testament type of church in their midst.

After ten days we received a telegram from the British Consul in Madrid: “DESIRABLE BRITISH SUBJECTS CONCENTRATE MADRID FOR EVACUATION.” We had two lady missionaries in Alcazar, to the north of us, and they had good reason for leaving, as the town was taken over by communists. I wanted to discuss our situation with the Consul himself and, as I was not allowed to use the telephone, I took a quick journey up to Madrid by train. Arriving in the late evening at the Consulate, I asked if I could spend the night there: “You had better not spend it anywhere else!” they said.

I had a good chat with one of the officials who advised us to leave for England as soon as possible. He explained that they were sending British subjects by train to the east coast where British naval vessels would take them on, but they feared that the railway line might be cut by the fighting and then it would be extremely difficult to get away. That night I slept on a mattress on a chest and was awakened from time to time by the sound of shooting outside. Next day I returned by train to Valdepeñas and it was decided that the three ladies should go as soon as they could, while my wife and I elected to stay for the time being.



Eventually we received some mail from England and we learned that my wife's mother was ill and very worried about us. That was the first indication to us that perhaps we should not remain. Our sphere of activities gradually lessened until we found that there was nothing we could do which the Spaniards themselves could not do without us. The visitation of other places was out of the question. Then I began to be harrassed with financial difficulties which I realized a Spaniard could deal with better than I. A foreign mission did not exist in the eyes of Spanish law and I was only allowed to draw a very small part of the funds in the bank. I therefore had the money transferred to one of the Spanish evangelists and wrote him to meet me in Madrid when we could discuss matters and I could hand over to him all the money I had left. One result of the withdrawal of all foreign missionaries was that the Spanish workers had enough in hand in August to last them until the end of the year, a thing that had never happened before. This was important because from that time the sending of money was no easy matter. Then I knew that once I was in England I would have a wonderful opportunity for deputation work and we hoped that in a few months the war would be over and we could return. So, as the leading seemed clear, we had a sad farewell meeting and took refuge in Madrid.

After a few days at the British Embassy we were taken by train to Alicante. Here we were taken, along with othe refugees of various nationalities, into the care of the British navy. Altogether we went on five different ships and everything was done for our comfort and safety. It was the end of August, the weather was warm and the sea calm. During those days my wife had an opportunity of talking to an escaped nun. My wife admitted that the atrocities committed against the Roman Church were terrible, but then got out her Testament and showed the nun Christ's teaching on love to God and one's neighbour. "If", she said, "instead of filling your churches with bombs and arms you had taught and practised these teachings, this terrible war would never have broken out." The nun could find no answer, and later my wife was able to talk to her of the wonderful intimacy we can have with God through the one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. The navy took us in three stages to Marseilles and from there we went by train and across the channel to London.

Once in England I soon found plenty to do. The first week I was invited to write an article for the local paper and soon invitations came thick and fast to address meetings of various kinds. One I remember was at a Women's Institute. When not travelling for the meetings, we spent our time alternately in my mother's home in West Norwood and my wife's parents' home in Bournemouth. Mr. Buffard was still getting letters from Spain and part of my work was to go through them, copy the most newsy items and put them in order for publication in our magazine. Deputation work and preaching engagements continued in the autumn of 1936 and right through 1937. In June of that year our first son was born and, as the Spanish war seemed to be dragging on indefinitely, we began to wonder whether the Lord would provide us with a home of our own in England.

In September I was preaching in Hurstpierpoint in Sussex and on the Monday I decided to go to the nearby town of Lewes, where an old college friend was the pastor of the local Baptist church. As soon as I told him of our situation he said that he was looking for a man to recommend to the little Baptist church in Newhaven, for which he was acting as Moderator! They had been worshipping in a school hall for something like 30 years, saving up to build a church building on the same site. Now they were looking for a man to build up the work. I paid two visits to the church

in October and November and on December 8th I received a unanimous call to be their pastor. On the 17th we went together to see about a home and secured a bungalow by a lead of 5 minutes! We went to Brighton market and bought some second-hand furniture and so began a new stage in our life.

We had a small, appreciative membership and there were soon signs of growth. In addition to the weekly prayer meeting I started a young people's meeting which, in due course, grew into a vigorous Christian Endeavour Society – one of the few in that area limited to young people. I was young myself and I greatly enjoyed that branch of the work. The Stone-Laying of the new building was planned for May 11th. My diary records that on the previous Sunday evening I preached on: "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3.6). There was an atmosphere of power and nearly all stayed for a time of prayer at the end (it was not our usual custom to have an after-church prayer meeting). On the Monday and Tuesday nights we had preparation meetings when I spoke on "Sanctification" as a preparation for the Thank-Offering and Stone-Laying on the Wednesday. The under-lying thought was that we should consecrate ourselves first before bringing our gifts. In September we opened the new church amid great rejoicing and soon the evening congregation was more than double it had been at our beginning.

I was still able to help Mr. Buffard with the Mission magazine and also take deputation meetings from time to time. I had my first experience of meetings in Northern Ireland, where I found an atmosphere nearer to revival than I had ever seen anywhere else.

While we were rejoicing in the Lord's blessings at Newhaven we could not forget our dear friends in Spain who had little to rejoice in except their knowledge of the Lord and, amid so many afflictions, His comforts and deliverances. Franco's troops continued to make gradual progress on the various fronts. On both sides there were terrible atrocities: civil war is so horrifying because there is no clear distinction between one side and the other. On both sides people were suspected of being disloyal and secretly working for the enemy, so on the flimsiest evidence many were just taken out and shot. Both sides had to rule by force and terror. The British press was full of war propaganda, especially in favour of Franco. But it must be said that the atrocities committed on his side were far more reprehensible because he controlled the disciplined forces of law and order, while the Government found themselves bereft of such forces and those they had were desperately needed at the battle fronts. They could not easily check the unauthorised violence of communists and anarchists. In many ways it was an unequal struggle. The Government had to appoint generals who had no adequate training and create a new army out of policemen and civilians whose one advantage was that they had the will to fight and defend their liberties.

Franco's advance from the south was strategically planned and effectively carried out. Avoiding the difficult defile through the mountains in our area, his troops pushed north on the western side, hugging the Portuguese border where they could retreat at any time of need. Their advance was preceded by crowds of terrified refugees, needing food and shelter, bringing shortages to the next town and hampering the defence.

The rebel troops attacked Madrid from the west and north and tried to get their tanks on to the wide boulevard that stretched southward through the heart of the

city. But their progress was halted, chiefly, I believe, by the international brigade, which included a number of volunteers from England and France. The resistance was so strong that it was obvious that the hoped-for "walk over" would not take place, and there would have to be a protracted conflict.

Italy and Germany decided to help Franco, and Hitler used it as a rehearsal of what was to come. Britain and France, fearful of a European conflagration, signed the non-intervention pact which prevented the Spanish Government from receiving any help but unarmed volunteers. Russia sent help, not to the Government, but to the communist party which became a "festering sore" on the Government side. In view of the odds it is surprising that the war lasted so long.

On January 28th 1939 Barcelona fell to Franco and thousands and thousands of government troops fled into France. Our Mission sent help to those doing relief and evangelistic work among these poor refugees who were living in tents on sandy wastes with just the bare necessities of life. We received some pathetic letters asking for such things as a pencil and paper, a handkerchief, a comb: one asked for a football and another for a correspondent of the fair sex!

Madrid still held out until there was a communist uprising against the government. The defenders in the trenches outside the city asked the Nationalists if they would grant an armistice while they went to put down the communists. This was readily granted and when the government troops came back they found bread and plenty of propaganda in their trenches! (I learnt this from a soldier who was there.) But after that, resistance was crumbling fast. There was a lull in the fighting and some boys who ventured out were kindly received by some Moorish troops and allowed a ride on their horses and taken to see the ruins of their former homes. That was the end, and on Tuesday March 28th 1939 the Madrid inhabitants trembled as Franco's troops marched in, welcomed by the 5th column, some of whom had to be let out of prison.

Now it is a remarkable fact that during all the 32 months that Madrid was under the so-called "Red Government" all the evangelical churches remained open. After the fall of the city, the church leaders quickly got together and appointed one of their number, the German Lutheran pastor, Senor Fliedner, to make an attempt at obtaining from the General in command permission to continue their services. They could not have made a better choice, for Germany had helped Franco, and when I did get back I had a most interesting account from Sr. Fliedner of his experience. I think it was not until the Thursday that he succeeded in locating the General's office. (This was not Franco; he did not come until they could arrange a Victory Parade.) The office was closely guarded by Moorish troops who would let no one pass except officers in uniform. Again and again the pastor tried, but they did not even speak Spanish. At last a Spanish officer did help him to get past the gate. But, though in the building, he still could not get access to the General. There were officers in uniform everywhere. At long last an important individual in civilian garb appeared and the pastor "tailed on" behind him as if he were his assistant, stopping only at the door of the General's office. When the man came out he went in! He told the General he had come to save the "Great Nationalist Movement" from dishonour and disgrace! he declared that for seventy years, and even during the "Red Regime", the Protestants in Madrid had met for worship every Sunday in their chapels. It would be a great disgrace to the Nationalist Movement if they should appear worse than the Reds! This plea, coming from a German citizen who might have contacts

with the foreign press, was something that no other pastor in Madrid could have brought. The General said, "I have very important matters to deal with; bring it in writing". The pastor immediately drew out a document from his pocket and laid it on the General's desk (doubtless with all the particulars of the Protestant chapels in the city). "Come again at 5 o'clock on Saturday", said the General, "and you will have my answer."

As it happened, 5 p.m. found the pastor at the cemetery finishing a funeral service and miles away from the General's office. They had a motor hearse and the pastor begged the driver to take him to the place. Somewhat reluctantly at first, the man complied. He knew that all the taxis were in the hands of the military. Arriving in a hearse as if he had been a funeral director, the pastor was immediately allowed entrance! "The answer is yes", said the General, "and you will get it in writing in three days time." "I trust the word of a soldier," said the pastor and lost no time in conveying the good news to his brethren. Next morning, all the Protestant churches in the capital opened their doors, and the following week held their special Easter services. This did not happen even in Barcelona, and in our part of the country the churches were not opened for seven long years!

Early in July, three months after the civil war had ended, Mr. Buffard and I succeeded in getting visas to return to Spain for a month. As soon as we had crossed the international bridge and entered the country from France, we immediately felt the atmosphere of fear. We were two hours in the customs, our finger prints were taken and my Bible, a list of addresses and an English book called "The Conversations of Christ", were all confiscated, though Mr. Buffard was allowed to keep his little Spanish New Testament.

We caught a train to Madrid and found the carriages in such a bad condition that we changed to what was called "first class". Springs were showing through the upholstery, most of the windows had no glass, and there was very little in the way of blinds or curtains to afford protection from the sun. As we journeyed we passed many stations in ruins and we saw villages where there did not seem to be one house undamaged.

We spent a few days in Madrid where we met several missionaries and Spanish pastors and heard many stories of nerve-racking nights and days but also of the Lord's deliverances. Later we continued to Valdepeñas and several towns in our area. In one train the seats were hard wooden boards with straight backs; another time we travelled in goods wagons fitted with wooden seats. The best journey we had was when a military officer gave us a lift in his car because we had missed our connection. I shall never forget that journey, because it was the only time I saw a plague of locusts. They filled the air and it was like going through a snowstorm in summer. Fortunately, the plague was not very widespread so there was not a great deal of damage to the crops; this was providential because there was enough poverty and hunger as it was.

The cancelling of all the currency of the Republic was causing great distress, as people lost all their savings. Some had foreseen this and had managed to exchange some of their money for clothes and other articles. The new government was giving some relief through "Auxilio Social", but in most places this was distributed by the ecclesiastical authorities and Protestants were excluded.

In Valdepeñas and some other places our people had continued with private meet-

ings, but they were more risky since the Franco victory, and in some places our friends had had their Bibles, hymn books and wall texts taken and destroyed. This was done by the military at the instigation of the priests. Many mourned the loss of loved ones, particularly young men; some had just disappeared without trace; but on the whole our people had stood firm and had experienced many answers to prayer. Our homes were intact, the clothing had been distributed according to instructions, and all our house-hold effects were there. Our friends had taken care of that.

We were able to confirm that our evangelist, Don Salvador, was in prison and his church used by the priest. Mr. Buffard had been informed of this by a very carefully worded letter which got through the censor. It said something like this: "You will remember the little chapel in Wide Street; it is quite different now with a pretty "Virgin" inside. Don Salvador is at Numbers 15.34" which read, "and they put him in ward because it was not declared what should be done to him". When we arrived he was still "in ward"; we could not see him and the image of the Virgin was still in our chapel.

Time was drawing near for us to be out of the country so we caught a train to Madrid, but separated on the way so as to visit more people. I alighted after about a third of the way in order to visit Don Francisco, the ex-priest, who we knew would be in danger. I found him still at home, scarcely daring to go to the door. I did my best to comfort him and the family. (A few weeks later he was imprisoned, tried, found innocent of crime and told he would be released. His sons visited him the day before he expected to come home, saying that they would return on the morrow. He seemed tolerably well, but when they went next day to fetch him, he was dead!)

When two days later I reached the frontier, I tried in the customs to reclaim my Bible and the other things they had confiscated. But I was told they were locked up in a cupboard and the man with the key had gone to another town! Next day I tried again and, getting no satisfaction, I decided to wait no longer. I crossed the French frontier and found myself in a land of peace, order and the normal conditions of life. What a relief!

Instead of continuing my journey home, I went to pay a brief visit to some missionaries who were working among the Spanish refugees in a large camp in the south of France. I took a train to Perpignan and spent the morning in their home, resting and writing down my experiences in Spain. In the afternoon, we made our way to the refugee camp where my friends had found some Spanish believers. About a quarter of a mile before the camp we were stopped by the gendarmes and questioned about our visit and given a permit. We drove into the car park, railed off by barbed wire from the rest of the camp: then my colleague had to go to a little office and give the names of the men we wished to see.

We had to wait half an hour while our friends were located and brought along to us, a delay, we learned, which was quite usual. We were then escorted to a railed-off enclosure where the interviews took place. We met three Christians from the camp who were very interested in what I could tell them of my visit to their homeland. One said he was to return the following day but he was nervous about it, as he had no assurance that he would not be put immediately into prison. Another said he dared not go back as he had been a "commissioner" under the so-called "Red" authorities.

These men had been given New Testaments and other Christian literature for their own use and to circulate among their companions. We heard of a New Testament which was going round a group of 200 men! We learned that when they had first fled across the border, things had been very rough, but now they had sleeping-shelters consisting of rough wooden gables with scarcely room for a man to stand up in the middle. Another improvement was that married men were allowed visits from their wives and children. In their comfortless situation it was a good thing that their flight had taken place in the spring and now it was summer. Many feared the coming winter, but they feared even more to return to Spain. Their prospect was dark indeed. How much they needed the Saviour!

There is often an interval or a pause in the operations of God's providence as also in the lives of His servants. There was a gap of 400 years between Genesis and Exodus and another of equal length between Malachi and Matthew. There was an interval of 40 years in the life of Moses, 40 days in the life of our Lord and three years when the Apostle Paul was in Arabia. In my case, the interval in my missionary career lasted nearly ten years through the Civil War and World War Two. Of course, I never ceased to work for the Mission. Mr. Buffard shared with me the letters he received from Spain and it was my task to extract the most interesting items of news for inclusion in the magazine. I also addressed deputation meetings from time to time. But my main occupation was, of course, the pastorate to which I had been led as narrated in the last chapter. It was a valuable experience made more difficult and poignant by the abnormal conditions of war-time. I could write a great deal about those years but they are scarcely relevant to the purpose of this book and I will limit myself to a brief summary.

In Newhaven we usually had some service personnel at our church – sometimes ten or a dozen in uniform, both fellows and girls. At the end of the morning service we tried to arrange that they were all offered hospitality in one or another of our homes, and, in view of the rationing, it was quite remarkable how our womenfolk managed to cope. Our second son was born in 1940 so we soon had rations which our little boys were not big enough to need. That helped with the hospitality.

In some of the most critical stages of the war the King called a "National Day of Prayer" and, in certain places, this brought increased attendances and provided an opportunity for the gospel. In the wonderful Dunkirk evacuation God sent a mist which protected our men from the enemy war-planes and a sea so calm that the hundreds of pleasure steamers and tiny boats could bring the thousands back safely to England. We felt also that God intervened in the "Battle of Britain" when the tiny defending air-force brought down so many attacking bombers that the much-feared invasion of Britain became almost impracticable. But, though there was more of a vague belief in the Creator than there is today, and fewer cults of all kinds, there was no turning to God in repentance on the part of the masses. Hearts were hard and some blamed God for their sufferings.

When we started at Newhaven, the only women's meeting in the town was an interdenominational one led by others. After a few raids this was closed down, so in 1941 my wife started a new one on our premises, calling it the "Women's Bright Hour". It began with an attendance of thirty, but by the following year it had grown to sixty and sometimes seventy. It was evangelistic and biblical and attracted women from other churches or from none. For the first Women's Anniversary we invited a well-known woman speaker to give the address on the weekday. She was Mrs. Ernest Brown (no relation), wife of a prominent member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister. She described how she often had to wait up for her husband at the close of a late night sitting of the House of Commons. She put the time to good use – reading the Bible and praying. It was a challenging word.

In 1943 the Lord moved us to London (East Acton Baptist Church) and there we had to face much more bombing than we had experienced in Newhaven. The

church buildings had already suffered damage before we got there. They consisted of a brick church in the front and a wooden hall about the same size at the back. The front building had been damaged and only the vestry and small rooms were usable, so the main services as well as the Sunday school were held in the back hall. In spite of the dangers, we carried on our morning and evening services, and in the afternoon there were up to eighty children in the Sunday School. We had a women's meeting, a prayer meeting and a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour. This latter was the only one that had to be modified on account of war conditions. The young men were away and the girls were rather nervous of going alone in the "black-out" (in those nights the town was as dark as a moor!), so this meeting was made monthly, always when the moon was full. We held it in the manse, usually finishing up with the "cup that cheers", and we had some very good times. We held our special services as in peace time – Christmas, Easter, Harvest, Church Anniversaries, Sunday School Anniversaries, Women's Anniversaries, Christian Endeavour Anniversaries, and baptismal services. We had many disturbed nights and I had to take my turn at "fire watching". We usually slept in a public shelter along with our neighbours. We were frequently called to help people in trouble and distress. After some raids we had the assistance of the girls of Mount Hermon Missionary Training College, then at Ealing. With two or three of them we cleared up the mess after homes had been bombed. I remember on one occasion preaching in a large church on the other side of London. In the front of the congregation there was a fine contingent of boys and girls in their brigade uniforms. It was a good opportunity, but I found it hard to hold their attention as a pigeon had entered through a high broken window and was incessantly flying around above our heads. That was my only experience of trying to preach to a company whose heads seemed to be on swivels!

After we had been in London a little over a year, a bomb fell in the playing fields at the back of our church and our wooden hall collapsed. I went in the morning to begin to clear up the mess and find a place where we could hold a members' meeting. On my way I saw a rainbow and was greatly comforted by this reminder of our covenant-keeping God. The following Sunday we held our services in the undamaged part of the brick building and soon afterwards we erected a screen and a roof with the wood of the damaged rear hall; it was, in effect, a little hall within the brick building. But it did not last long as the roof was found to be unsafe.

Then the Lord provided for us through the kind offer of a Christian lady (belonging to the Anglican Church) who lived in a large house about two hundred yards up the road. She offered us the use of her large, unfurnished upstairs room. It had been a ball-room and there was room for seventy people. From the church we brought our piano, tables, chairs etc., put "blackout" curtains at the windows, and were safely installed by the following Sunday. We were also allowed to use her front room as a vestry before and after our services. At our Church Anniversary services we managed to accommodate seventy-five people. She also kindly allowed us to use her premises for the Sunday School and Women's Meetings. There we carried on our work for several months. But for the last stage of my pastorate we were back in our own premises, thanks to a clever carpenter who had, in his spare time, used the wood left from the back hall to construct another one half the size.

A few months later (May 7th 1945) Germany surrendered and we remembered the



need of Spain. On July the 18th I gave in my notice of resignation to take effect from the end of October. I reminded the church that God had originally called me to be a missionary in Spain, not a pastor in England, and now that the war was over there was every chance that I could get back to Spain where the need of the gospel was very much greater. In due course we said a sad farewell, but remained in residence in the district as they asked us to stay in the manse until such time as they had another pastor. This was to prevent its being requisitioned by the local authorities in the interval. We were only too glad to stay, as we literally had nowhere else to go!

Once I was free of the pastorate I spent several months in deputation work as a preparation for a return to Spain. I travelled widely, trying to revive the interest of the Lord's people in the resuscitation of our work. One thing was clear to us: we could not go as a family to Spain – there was the boys' need of schooling and the situation in that country in the matter of food, heating, schooling etc. was far worse than in England. Spain's recovery from the devastations of her own civil strife had been greatly hampered by war conditions which cut off all international trade. When peace was restored, the United States began to send what was known as "Marshall Aid" to most of the European countries, but not to Spain because she was ruled by a dictator similar to Hitler. Even the French-Spanish frontier was closed, so that the only way to get into Spain was by sea or by the comparatively expensive new air line – which latter I rejected to save funds. Percy Buffard's health had deteriorated, so it was decided that I should go alone, travel round the country to assess the new situation and return to report.

In January 1947 the church informed us that they had invited another pastor and they would be glad if we could vacate the manse before February the 10th. In my deputation travels I had kept my eyes open and made enquiries about a place to live, but the housing shortage was very acute. I remember seeing a small two-roomed wooden hut near Bristol. I was told that it had cost £100 to build and had just been sold for £1,000!

We vacated the manse before the date indicated and were given temporary refuge in the home of my wife's parents in Bournemouth. Most of our furniture had to be put in store. Then, as a temporary measure, we were allowed to use a furnished bungalow in the Winton district of Bournemouth – the property of a relative who was glad to have us there to prevent its being requisitioned. Meanwhile I was awaiting the granting of a visa to return to Spain. The travel agent in London had said, "As soon as you get your visa, inform me, and I will try and get you a sailing to Gibraltar, but you will probably have to wait six weeks". Five months after my application for a visa I was informed that it would be granted on a Tuesday, so I went up to the Spanish Consulate in London to collect it and went straight on to the travel agent. He told me he could get me a passage to Gibraltar leaving Southampton the following Sunday! I promised to wire him the following day.

Now it so happened that a few days previously the relative who had let us live in his bungalow had called on my wife when I was out and indicated that he would be glad if we could evacuate his premises as soon as possible. On my return home with my visa I told Doris of the possibility of sailing on the Sunday but added, "I really do not like to leave you with the problem of where to live in the future". She replied, "You have been waiting five months to get into Spain. Now God has opened the door you must go and He will look after us".

I shall never forget the morning I left to get the boat. Within, I suppose a half an hour of leaving the house we had a visitor who said to Doris, "Did you know that your father owned a house in Parkstone?" "Yes," she said, "I have heard of it". He then said, "I think you will be interested to know that my grandparents have been living there and they will be moving out in a week's time". So before I left my little family, I knew that the Lord had provided for them a suitable permanent home while I went backwards and forwards to Spain. How blest we were I realized afterwards. Such was the housing shortage of those days that we might have found a home only in some distant place where we knew no-one and with no suitable spiritual home. As it was, my wife found herself surrounded by her closest relatives – her parents, two sisters and three brothers and with a good evangelical church within walking distance. What all this meant to her while I was away cannot easily be exaggerated. "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!"

The good ship "Corfu" was approaching Gibraltar. The weather was stormy and the Spanish coast looked dark and sinister under the rain clouds; I was feeling rather uncomfortable because of the rolling of the ship and somewhat lonely because I had found no fellow-Christian on board; I was sad, thinking of how much my Spanish brothers and sisters had suffered since I last saw them, and somewhat apprehensive, for I was going to a country where religious liberty was a dead letter. Then something made me cross to the other side of the ship and there I saw a different sight – the Rock of Gibraltar like a crouching lion bathed in sunshine and crowned by a beautiful rainbow! For the second time in a year God spoke to me through this bright symbol of His eternal faithfulness. I cheered up at once.

Soon after landing I got in touch with the Army Scripture Reader and through him I found some Spanish believers who had taken refuge from the persecution in Spain. On the Sunday, I attended the Methodist church, thronged by fellows and girls in uniform, and I was invited to speak. The same evening I took part in an open air meeting in one of the central squares and when the service fellows had finished their testimonies I immediately began in Spanish. There was at once a new interest among some of the crowd, and it thrilled me to be able once more to preach in the beautiful language of Spain. In Gibraltar's Main Street I saw the Spanish "señoritas" going devoutly to Mass, rosary in hand. How astonished I would have been if an angel had said to me: "One of these girls will one day be your wife". Sometimes truth is stranger than fiction.

After a few days in Gibraltar, I crossed the frontier into the Spanish town of La Linea accompanied by a woman whose husband was the leader of a small congregation, meeting in his house. They gave me a warm welcome and gracious hospitality. Next day they asked me to conduct a young people's Bible study which was timed to begin at 10.30p.m.! At that hour we were sitting round the supper table and I was for rushing off so as not to be late. But they insisted on having family prayers first, as one of the family would be in bed before we got back. We wended our way through the streets – still animated with crowds of little children not yet in bed – and arrived at the meeting place at 10.50! No one seemed surprised at our lateness. In the room were some 15 young people each with a biggish Bible and obviously keen and interested – a most gratifying sight. We had a very good time with the Word of God and, egged on by their questions, I did not finish until nearly midnight, when I expected a general rush home – but not a bit of it! They sat talking as if it were six o'clock in the evening. In the end we got to bed at about one. I got adapted when I realized that their timetable for meals and everything else was about two hours later than ours.

At that place I spent a week, with meetings and visits every day. I should explain that in the extreme south of the country, which Franco had conquered in the first few weeks of his revolt, Protestant services had been allowed long before the civil war was over, largely I believe through the intervention of a German or Swiss consul. The evangelical churches in Seville had been open for years, but they were not allowed to put a name outside their doors, and unofficial house meetings in smaller

places were risky. Protestant propaganda of any kind was strictly forbidden.

In La Linea I was joined by an evangelist who had trained in the Valdepeñas Bible School, and, with him, I went on to Malaga and Seville, holding almost daily meetings in each place, some in the re-opened chapels but quite a number in private houses. A fortnight after arriving on Spanish soil I caught the night train from Seville to Valdepeñas. It was one of the worst journeys I had ever had in my life – 14 hours in a train corridor, part of the time standing and part of the time sitting on some luggage. I arrived at 3.30a.m. and was thrilled to find about a dozen of the local Christians waiting for me at that unearthly hour. They carried my luggage and joyfully conducted me on the mile walk to the Missionhouse, our own home not being ready for habitation.

The welcome meeting was held the following evening, not in the chapel, which had remained closed for many years, but in the small hall within the high walls of the Mission compound – most suitable for unofficial, semi-secret meetings. The place could scarcely hold fifty people, but on that occasion some eighty managed to squeeze in. They brought out of “cold storage” a little portable organ and were very anxious for me to play it as they had had no musical accompaniment for about ten years.

The following Sunday evening the numbers were even greater, some having to stand all the time. While I was preaching I was suddenly interrupted by a young woman with a baby in her arms; she rose to her feet and said, “Jesus is my Saviour”, thereby making confession of conversion. Later, two more young women made a similar confession – and this without any direct appeal. It was wonderful! Afterwards I had a talk with the three and was persuaded they were genuine.

I learned that a few weeks earlier the congregation had had a visit from a preacher from the Barcelona area and fourteen people had in similar fashion made public confession of conversion. There was a wonderful atmosphere of revival and I found a fine group of young people some thirty strong. I learned that most of the time I was away they had continued to meet sporadically, mostly in homes and sometimes in a wood some two miles from the town. The most gifted man in the congregation had fallen into sin and had been disciplined, so latterly most of the meetings had been conducted by a brave woman in her own home and by a humble cobbler with little gift. He had been imprisoned twice for his activities, but he had doggedly carried on a Sunday School for the children and meetings for adults. He and his family had taken up residence in the mission-house and were taking great care of the property. I rejoiced to see how God had blessed them and they inspired me as much as I could inspire them.

On my second Sunday in our area, I went to the mining town of Puertollano and found that the image of the Virgin had been removed from the chapel and the place handed back in a dirty and dilapidated condition. On his release from imprisonment, the evangelist had removed to Madrid, but he arranged to return the Sunday I was there, as he thought the authorities would not be so likely to arrest him in the presence of a foreigner. We shared the services between us and there were seventy persons in the evening service. He returned to Madrid by the night train.

I had to report to the police at every place where I spent the night and present a form containing identification details. Half of this form they had to keep and the other half stamp and return to me. It was rather amusing that in some places they

had evidently not had a suspicious foreign visitor for some time, so I had to tell them what they had to do! I had no difficulty, but if I had gone about giving out tracts I would soon have been turned out of the country. (Later on, one of our evangelists was fined £30 because an American visitor had given out 6 tracts in a public place!)

During that exploratory visit to Spain I travelled widely, from Gibraltar in the south to Barcelona in the north. I visited churches of various denominations and had many useful discussions with workers on the spot. I brought back three outstanding impressions: (1) the severity of the trials which evangelical Christians had to endure, (2) the faithfulness of the majority and (3) the splendid opportunity where churches were allowed to re-open.

In Madrid and the Barcelona area I had some thrilling meetings – congregations numbering several hundreds and frequent conversions. But in some places whole churches had disappeared. Leaders had been imprisoned and, on release, had moved away to try to get employment and avoid the whole family suffering. The few believers left had suffered so much that they kept their faith a secret. One young schoolmaster said to me: “I went where I was not known as a Protestant and kept my faith a secret so as to get a school, for I could not bear to see my widowed mother starve!” In many places the priests had declared, “Protestantism has finished in Spain” and many people believed it.

When we visited isolated believers and told them that in Valdepeñas and other places churches were being resuscitated they replied: “But that could not happen here”. The legal situation was, that where there was an evangelical church building and some responsible person willing to sign the petition for the re-opening, it was usually granted after a few weeks: but in some places the intimidation had been such that no one would sign the application.

Again in other places, a hall was opened for worship and then closed again on some trumped-up charge. Our own pre-war workers had suffered so much that only two were able to return to the work: Senorita Irene opened a little home for the orphans of the evangelical community, while Don Salvador did later on return to the mining town. So where meetings could be held there was a great shortage of preachers. I made up my mind that when I came back from England to settle down, I would try to do something to supply that shortage.

In my travels I stayed a few days in Madrid, where I received valuable help from a “Brethren” missionary of some experience and, through him, I was introduced to a high-up official in the British Embassy who proved to be a great help from that time on. I was able to have an interview with the Governor of our province to present our application for the re-opening of our church buildings in Valdepeñas and Santa Cruz. I soon found that the authorities would take more notice of a foreigner than a Spaniard, so from that time on it often fell to me to intercede with governors, mayors and police chiefs and, the higher up the man was, the more courteous was his attitude.

Travel was by no means easy: on some of my journeys I had to queue the day before to get a ticket. On one occasion I caught the train alright but it did not move for three hours! Then, as my visitor's visa drew near to expiration I had to go once more to Madrid, over a hundred miles away, to ask for an exit visa. The meals I had varied greatly. Although the family in Valdepeñas with whom I stayed did their best for me, I suffered at times from indigestion. Food was rationed, but in Val-

depeñas the allocation was irregular, sometimes only one in six weeks. But you could always get more if you paid “black market” prices. I remember the fish soup which tasted like the “washing up” water after a meal of kippers. That gave me a permanent distaste for that particular delicacy. Then there was the barley bread which went black on the third day. In my journeys I had to travel at irregular hours. Once I had to be up at 4.15 a.m.; other times I did not get to bed until the early hours of the morning. The Lord sustained me (though I had to see a doctor as soon as I got back to England).

Before leaving Spain it was my great joy to see our churches re-opened for services in Santa Cruz and Valdepeñas. Santa Cruz was opened first and a party of us went the 11 miles by train to swell the crowd. The local believers were encouraged, but few outsiders were present as our friends there had not continued secret house meetings as was done in Valdepeñas. The re-opening service in the latter place was wonderful. During ten years they had faithfully carried on their meetings “on the edge of the law”: now they could use again their own building – though with no exterior advertisement. In preparation for the great occasion, the walls had been newly distempered and appropriate texts inscribed, while the sisters had given the place a thorough clean and then adorned it with flowers. The chapel was packed, some people having to stand, and the most heart-warming item was the baptism of twelve converts who had received the Lord during the past year or two of the oppression. Their testimonies before entering the water were varied and striking. That was a service I think I shall never forget. Its significance was all the greater because during my ten years absence two secret baptismal services had been held; one when they got into the chapel without opening the front door and did not dare to sing a hymn, and another when they used a bath!

It was then time for me to return to England and report to Mr. Buffard, and I got home on July 20th 1946. I had to get a ration card from the food office and see a dentist and the doctor – who authorised my being supplied with extra milk in order to get fit again. I enjoyed a time of relaxation with the family and addressed a number of deputation meetings.

In November I was back in Spain, this time travelling by train as the French-Spanish frontier had been re-opened. After consulting with friends in Madrid I got back to Valdepeñas to find a crowd at the station to welcome me. I soon learned that winter in Spain was very different from what I had found it in the summer. One frequent nuisance was the sudden failure of the electric light. One had the impression that the local power station had enough current for say two thousand homes and, when 2,001 people switched on, the whole lot were cut off. My first Sunday evening service was held in the light of two candles on the platform and I found myself preaching to dark phantoms, hoping that they had not all gone to sleep. The darkness made no difference to the singing as, owing to the shortage of hymn books and the presence of some who could not read, it was the custom to read out each verse before it was sung. The attention of the people was riveted upon the preacher in his tiny circle of light and (as I was told afterwards) the grotesque shadows his movements produced on the wall behind. How glad we were when, near the end, the lights came on, and the phantoms were transformed into recognizable people, about a hundred of them! These sudden light failures were awkward in the home. I bought an oil lamp and discovered that the men at the oilman’s stores would not

let you have any paraffin oil unless you bought at least one bar of inferior soap which nobody wanted.

Soon I was informed by the local police that I would not be allowed to remain more than a month in the country without getting a special permit, which was only obtainable at the provincial police station forty miles away. This involved an early start to catch a bus which was supposed to leave at 7 o'clock but did not go until 8.15. It was freezing cold. I got the needed document at eleven o'clock but there was no bus back until 4.30, so I took refuge in a restaurant at mid-day and for the rest of the time I walked about and was very grateful that in Spain you can buy a cup of coffee in a cafe and stay for three hours without anyone bothering about you. I caught a bus at 4.30 which brought me home at 7 o'clock. The next day it got even colder. There were four inches of snow and I had to wear my overcoat all day. I worked in my study with a brazier at my feet: this was red hot when first lighted but cooled to a grey after half an hour and had to be renewed at mid-day. In the late evening I did some of my reading and writing in bed with a hot water bottle. It was unusually cold that winter and there was difficulty in getting the church heated.

Soon after arriving from England I began preparations for my first "preachers' course". I called it that, but I never turned anyone away who wanted to study the Bible. I do not think there is any study so profitable and fascinating as that of the Bible. Its material is so varied and through its pages the love of God to us sinners is progressively revealed. I felt that I could make no more important contribution to the evangelisation of needy Spain than by teaching the young people the profit and pleasure of Bible study. With a series of questions I prepared studies by books, by biographies, by portions, by doctrines, by history (telescopic) and by texts (microscopical). I would strongly recommend any reader who in these days finds himself unemployed or underemployed to set aside an hour or two for this most profitable occupation. If done with prayer it is even more helpful. (For a suggested series of questions see the appendix).

For the young men in Spain I added to the above something on homiletics, on the various Protestant denominations working in the country and on the favourite verses of the Roman Catholics. I also had a "sermon class" when the young men took it in turns to give a short address and afterwards hear the comments of their fellows.

My first course was a small one held in Seville especially for the benefit of some of the young men I had met in the southern churches before arriving at Valdepeñas. Some of these were unexpectedly prevented from attending and in the end the number was reduced to three plus the evangelist who worked in Seville and the area. The courses lasted eleven days, the students were very keen and I found that the presence of the evangelist was a great help. He took full notes with a view to passing on the material to others. In the little church of Santa Cruz (eleven miles south of Valdepeñas) I found that there were seven men, all but one young, who had some idea of preaching, but their only spare time was in the evening so, as this was not far away, I began to give them parts of the course piece-meal whenever I could visit them.

The Valdepeñas course was attended by five young preachers plus others who could come in the evenings. I had to start from scratch as most of them had no books except a Bible, a hymn book and perhaps a "Pilgrim's Progress". The five were accommodated in the mission house, which by this time had become an

orphanage under the care of a brave Spanish woman named Irene. The orphans squeezed together to make room for the visitors and Irene slipped into the classes whenever she could. I was very encouraged by that Bible course and told the young men that I would try and hold another the following year.

I spent Easter in Valdepeñas and was glad to find that it was a far more religious festival than it is in England. While the Roman Catholics had their processions, we had some very well attended services with congregations on Good Friday morning and evening as large as we would get on a Sunday. For those special services I had taught the young people to sing some appropriate hymns and these proved very effective. On easter Sunday we had a specially impressive service in the evening. The local preacher made an appeal and seven people, mostly young, responded with confession of conversion.

Before leaving for England, I visited some of the villages where churches had once existed, travelling by train, bus and donkey. The village people always had a rug or two on the donkey and when it was cold or wet I put that over my overcoat, but the first journey I did in that way I got soaked in spite of the rug (I think I had forgotten to take an umbrella) and I remember my companion and I steaming in front of a roaring wood fire when we got to our destination. I had a few meetings in houses, and visited a number of homes, preaching the gospel and trying to arouse the believers. I found it hard going: they had been so long oppressed and isolated from fellow-Christians in other places.

Franco's conquest had been carried out by the army and the Roman Church: the result was that all non-Catholics were regarded as enemies – if not communists, then hand-in-glove with them, and the revenge in some small places was terrible. Prisoners were beaten mercilessly. One man told me that he had said to the police when they interrogated him, "I will sign anything you like, as long as you do not beat me". Three leading men of the Protestant community in one village did not live long after they were released. A woman was imprisoned for not kneeling in the street as the priest passed carrying the "host".

In the same village, they told me that at the end of the Civil War, when the army and the Church took over, a priest with a soldier visited the homes of the Protestants, taking away Bibles, hymn books, text cards and everything they could find connected with our faith. One woman told me that she kept her Bible by putting it in the chicken house, another hid her's under her baby's mattress, and a third "lent" her's to a friendly catholic neighbour. I visited a young woman named Isidra who had been imprisoned and after being at liberty for a year she was seized and had her hair shaved off (a mark of disgrace commonly inflicted on women who had incurred the displeasure of the authorities.) She did not know the reason for this barbarous treatment, but she supposed it was because of her Protestant faith. Who could be surprised that some of these people found it very hard to love their enemies?

After these experiences in the villages it was quite a relief to get back to Valdepeñas and prepare for my return to England. My last Sunday was unforgettable. That evening we held a baptismal service – one of the finest I have ever attended. The place was crowded. I estimated the number present as 180, and quite a number had to stand all the time. The previous July we had baptized twelve converts, now there were thirteen more who had convinced the elders and the church members



that they had been truly converted to God. The climax came when my address was suddenly interrupted by a young man who stood to his feet and said clearly and decisively: "Jesus is my Saviour". The service finished, according to custom, with the Lord's Supper, when those baptized were welcomed one by one and partook of the elements for the first time. In those days it had become the custom for new members to be welcomed not only by one of the elders but also by all the members individually, in the case of women and girls with a kiss. With so many people trying to greet so many others there was a prolonged interval of happy confusion at the end. In addition the young man who had confessed his faith was also greeted with a hand shake. That was a wonderful climax to the months I had spent in Spain in 1947. In reporting afterwards on the situation, I could not but contrast the revival at Valdepeñas and a few other places with the sad state of things elsewhere. Six of our pre-war churches had disappeared. In some, the leader had been killed or died; in others, he had been imprisoned and, on release, he had moved away to save himself and his family from molestation and also increase his chances of getting employment. The few believers left were scared, dispirited, and many in poor health. From that time on, at almost every meeting in Valdepeñas, we prayed for the "isolated believers".

I returned to England in May and, after a few weeks of relaxation, I travelled widely, addressing the meetings which Mr. Buffard had prepared for me. It was at this time that my wife and I began to consider prayerfully whether it was the Lord's will that we should continue to live so long apart. There was work for her to do in Spain. But what about our boys' education? This dilemma has to be faced by many missionaries; it is part of the peculiar "cross" appointed for them, and not all missionaries' children have been happy with the sacrifice which, willy nilly, they have had to share. The situation in Spain concerning education, food and everything else was so bad that we could not consider taking them there. Should we put them in a boarding school? We prayed and asked the Lord for clear guidance.

That summer the Lord made it possible for us to have a holiday in Swanage. We attended the Baptist Church and I spoke to the pastor (the Rev. Stanley Smith) about our problem. He was very helpful. He kindly visited us at our lodgings and gave us a list of Christian or church boarding schools. There were two in or near Swanage which I visited. One had no vacancies for three years and the other did not appeal to me. Then, almost at the end of our holiday, the pastor said, "There is a Christian doctor here who could tell you something about a Christian prep. school in Sussex. He is at this moment staying at the boarding house called "Cintra". I went to see the doctor and he said the school was excellent but he doubted very much whether I would be able to get my boys there before they were too old.

Now, the Lord had arranged that the following Sunday I should be preaching in the Arundel area, so I had suggested to Percy Buffard that on the Monday I should pay him a visit at his home near Haywards Heath. On arrival I spoke to him about the schools and particularly the one in Sussex. he said, "that is not far from here, I'll phone the headmaster and see if he can see you this afternoon, and then I'll drive you there". I went to see the head, Mr. Mowll. He was very sympathetic but he said he had no room that autumn and after that Paul would be too old to enter. So I left, feeling that that door was firmly shut. But on the Thursday I received a surprising letter from Mr. Mowll. He explained that he had so many applications that he did

not usually receive new pupils without a reference from someone he knew. When I was there I had no reference, but he had the next day received one from someone living in Swanage. By the same post he had received another letter informing him that two of the pupils would not be returning in September as their parents would be taking them abroad. He therefore felt it right to offer me those two places and added, "do not be too concerned about the financial side, God called me to educate, not to make money"!

As we began to count up all the coincidences that had led up to that offer (if we had not gone to Swanage when the doctor was there ... if the pastor had not taken such an interest ... if I had been preaching elsewhere on that Sunday etc. ...) we realized that this was the hand of the Lord, and to cap it all, the Mission Council quickly promised to stand by us financially. This clear guidance was a great comfort especially to Doris, for I know that the separation from her two little boys meant much more to her than to me. We agreed that I should leave in October, but that she should remain in England until January so that the boys would know that their mother was not too far away. She could visit them and have them home for half term and the Christmas holidays.

In September we took our boys to catch the special train at Victoria station. I shall never forget that scene. The train was full of boys and girls going to boarding school in the south of England, some compartments being allocated to each school. It was a most emotive scene: some of the mothers were in tears and some of the children also, especially the girls, and when the whistle was blown all the parents were competing to get the last word and the last wave! Our two went off happily enough, though our faith was tested afterwards. On the Saturday or Sunday they were asked to write home and both burst into tears. Paul quickly got over it, but Dennis, who was only seven, cried every evening for a week or two. To our great relief he cheered up before I left the country.

I had a troublesome journey to Spain owing to a transport strike in Paris which made it extremely difficult to get across the city to catch my train south. Fortunately, I found refuge for the night in the home of some missionaries and continued next day. I finally arrived at Madrid in time to attend the inaugural meetings, lasting a week, of the newly rebuilt Brethren hall holding seven hundred people – at that time, the largest Protestant place of worship in the country. The conferences and discussions with missionaries and national workers were very helpful.

After I had continued my journey to Valdepeñas, I received the news that the week following its inauguration the new hall was attacked by some young men of Catholic Action. They smashed the windows and the organ, damaged the seats and scrawled in red paint above the platform: "Long live the Virgin!". The police were called, the British embassy was informed, and it was reported on the B.B.C. Spanish programme. Later we heard that the culprits had been arrested, but it is not likely that they suffered any punishment. If there were a fine the priest would soon find the money.

Actually, the attack was overruled for good: it served to advertise the place, for, in accordance with the law, there was no outside advertisement and, in spite of its size, the building was hidden and difficult to find if you did not know where to look. After that, all the Protestant churches in the capital had a police guard during their services. Later there were other attacks on Protestant halls, including one in

Seville where the pastor and members of his church were assaulted and a similar one in Linares on the southern edge of our area. I am glad to say that we continued unmolested, though some of our people got rather nervous.

I had a second Christmas with Spaniards and then in January went off to the villages again. I did not succeed in getting the authorities to return our little chapels, one of which was being used as a school, but I did have some good house meetings with a few spontaneous professions of conversion. It is a joy to preach about the "living water" to people who are obviously thirsty! From one village, I went with a boy and a donkey (loaded with my luggage) to a hamlet on the bus route where the boy said I could wait in the house of his aunt until the bus arrived. The woman received me in a friendly way and, getting out a tract from the Scripture Gift Mission, I began to explain the way of salvation. At intervals there was the sound of a vehicle on the road and I had to rush out in case it should be the bus. Each time I returned disappointed and continued my simple gospel talk by instalments.

Time passed and I was getting short of material when the daughter came in from the olive picking, and I felt constrained to give her also some crumbs of the "bread of life". Still no bus! They began to prepare their frugal meal to which I added the provisions I had brought (I rarely went on any of those journeys without taking at least some bread). As it was getting late, I asked if there was an inn in the place. They said there was, so I said "good night" and set off to find a bed. It was not very clean but it was infinitely preferable to waiting in the village street.

In the morning the inn-keeper told me that he was sure that the bus had not passed during the night. I was talking to him on the road when I saw my hostess of the previous evening waving frantically to me. I rushed back, picked up my bags and just caught the bus! It was 12 hours late and only stopped for a half a minute. When I heard the complaints of the passengers about being held up all night in the cold and in a deserted place while the driver and his mate tried to repair the vehicle, I realized that I could thank God for the refuge of a dirty inn.

After holding house meetings in two or three more villages, I returned to Valdepeñas to prepare for the coming of my wife. Another stage in my life had been reached.



*Preachers' Bible Course with the  
Rev. John Savage from England*

# Trials and triumphs

# 6

In the last chapter I mentioned the attacks on evangelical churches in different parts of Spain. It became clear in due course that these acts of vandalism had been inspired by statements in print written by some of the highest ecclesiastical authorities in the land. I am sure that this will greatly surprise many people in free England who have no idea what Romanism can be like when it is isolated from the purer and more Biblical faith rediscovered at the Reformation.

Cardinal Segura of Seville became notorious for his attacks on the humble, insignificant little churches where the gospel was preached. He wrote: "The great damage to the faith of the Spanish people caused by the spread of this heresy demands that these centres of false religion should never be authorised." The Counsellor General of Catholic Action wrote in similar vein: "The new enemy, ever more aggressive has commenced .... a disquieting offensive against the Catholic Church and against the religious and social peace of our country." While the Archbishop of Saragossa wrote about "the Protestants who usually seek out the ignorant and uncultured people, taking advantage of their good faith." In a provincial paper there was an editorial comment which included the following: "We have the truth and cannot tolerate error, nor allow it to be propagated any more than we would allow the propaganda of vice and licentiousness. Let us make life impossible for the 'pastors', even if they keep within the limits of the law, in a word – drum them out! The Inquisition no longer exists but its spirit must remain alive ... we need not resort to illegal methods, but if at any time there should be blows in the streets let it not be we who receive them."

As a result of this propaganda six evangelical halls were assaulted and many individual Christians had to suffer a great deal. It was easy in Spain for the priests to equate Romanism with patriotism and thus believers were often regarded as traitors. How did the believers react? Was there anything corresponding to the I.R.A.? The young vandals who wrecked the hall in Madrid were prayed for and Christian young people tried to contact them with the gospel of peace. Later a pastor in Madrid, who was converted before the war in Valdepeñas, found some young fellows throwing mud at his newly whitewashed wall. He took out a pail of water to them to wash their hands after they had finished. A young man got up in the prayer meeting in Valdepeñas and prayed for the doctor whose negligence had allowed his illness to get a firmer hold. A few months later he died. I did find some bitterness in a few of our people, especially in isolated places – but talk of reprisals? Never!

In January 1948 my wife returned to Spain in the company of two elderly ex-missionaries who came for a visit of a few weeks. They were all impressed with the Valdepeñas church and their first Sunday evening service was crowned by three spontaneous confessions of conversion. My wife was overjoyed to find that a number of the girls in her pre-war Sunday School class were now truly converted and baptized members of the church. After her twelve years' absence her Spanish came back very quickly and within a few months she started Bible Studies with the girls, which in time developed into a most effective ministry, still today remembered with gratitude to God.

The week after Easter I set off alone once more to visit the villages. Train and bus took me to a hilltop village where I was told by letter I would be met by a man with a donkey. It was raining hard when I alighted from the bus and, refusing all the offers of help from boys who wanted to carry my bag to the inn, I looked about for someone to meet me. There were plenty of men but none accompanied by the aforesaid quadruped, nor did any face brighten at the sight of a foreign-looking man. I therefore took my stand hard by the wall and put up my umbrella wondering what I would do if no one met me. After about ten minutes I espied a man driving before him a donkey which seemed to have a rooted objection to going straight so that the two progressed by a series of diagonals! (A donkey never does that when it is going home.) The man, though not the donkey, made straight for me and I knew my wait was over.

My new friend lashed my luggage on to the donkey's back and off we started in the rain. He told me that the distance to be covered was about six miles and assured me that the donkey could carry me as well as my luggage. But seeing the soaking condition of the animal's back and the utter impossibility of covering it with anything dry, I told him I would rather walk. Some two hours later, plodding along in the dark and puddles, "faint yet pursuing", muddy, hungry and tired, I arrived at the end of my first day's journey.

In that village I spent two days and held four meetings. These had to be held in the house of one of the believers as the nice little chapel, built by the labour and sacrifice of the local Christians, had been taken over by the local authorities for a school. Knowing the difficulties of getting it back and the further difficulties of getting it licensed for worship, I suggested to the local brethren that it was better for its present use to continue as the building would at least be kept clean and in repair. The meetings were well attended: at night between fifty and sixty packed into the small room, a good proportion having to remain standing. On the second afternoon I had allowed it to be known that I intended taking a photograph of the people who came to the meeting. It was rather amusing to see three girls turn up, wearing their best clothes with flowers in their hair and very obvious lipstick! Alas they were too late! The photo had been taken outside and now we were all in the house, for I had no flash.

In the second village I was kindly entertained by a Christian woman who kept a shop. As the only place where I could sit was in a recess behind the counter, and the shop was only closed for the meeting and bedtime, my stay was very much under the public eye. Fortunately, the weather had cleared up so I was able to escape to the fields with my Bible for a little time of prayer and preparation. The meetings were well attended. In the afternoon the presence of a number of little children made it difficult to get quiet, but in the evening, that is at about ten o'clock, the attention and silence were wonderful. That woman and her husband were the only believers there, they had a hard time, and I was very glad to give them a little encouragement.

Next day, mounted on a third borrowed donkey, I had a delightful ride in beautiful weather to visit the church at the hill-top village of Chiclana de Segura. The meetings were not quite so well attended as in the other two places, but they were the largest held there for twelve years and undoubtedly the most fruitful. A lame young man, who had attended my first Bible course, was holding weekly meetings and trying to revive the work. There, too, the meetings had to be held in homes as

we were not allowed to use our chapel, while our organ and forms were still in the Roman Catholic Church. One of my meetings there was "special". Seeing the motley congregation with so many little children I feared that it would be difficult to get silence, but the hush of God fell on them! I could explain it in no other way, and suddenly I had one of those happy interruptions which were the most encouraging feature of our work at that time. It came from the high-pitched voice of a little girl of about 13 years of age and, owing to stunted growth, looking much younger and paralysed in her legs. She could not stand up as others had done but she called out from her seat, "Jesus is my Saviour." Before the meeting finished five others had also made spontaneous confession of conversion. No direct appeal was made, but during that short week-end no less than fourteen children and young people made confession of faith in Christ. Because of the obvious emotion I could not say that everyone had been born again of the Spirit, but I left that place full of gratitude to God.

My journey from Chiclana was not exactly first class travel. I got a lift to the next village and outside the latter I spent no less than five hours, hoping for a lorry to take me on. Peasants coming home from the fields opened their eyes at the unusual sight of a (for them) well dressed man (for I was wearing a tie) seated on the grass verge with a case, a portable typewriter and an umbrella, waiting, Micawber-like for "something to turn up"! I planned to arrive at my next destination before the bus because it was so often late, but that evening it was early, so I arrived in good time for my next meeting which was planned for ten o'clock at night. There I was able to preach the gospel to a score of people, including a Christian family of a widow with four children to whom I was glad to give some encouragement. The final stage home was memorable for my having to share a room with a stranger at an inn and for a two hour railway journey in a draughty corridor. When I got back at 5 a.m. it was to appreciate anew the comforts of our Spanish home.

Soon after that I held the second Bible course with twelve young men plus a few others who attended in the evenings. It was planned to last ten days, but I went down with 'flu at the end of the week and the young men returned home. Those who came for the second time showed signs of progress.

From 1948 onwards our life followed a similar pattern year after year, and if I were to recount all the journeys we took, all the trials that beset us and all the blessings we received this record would become interminable. Obviously, the same kind of experiences were repeated again and again. Every year we returned to England in June to see our boys. I had many deputation meetings in various parts of the British Isles and then spent the month of August with the family. We returned to Spain in the autumn.

In 1950 we had to solve the problem of the education of our son, Paul, who was getting too old for the prep school in Sussex. After much prayer and a lot of investigation we decided on a state school for which we would get a government grant and eventually the way was opened up for him to have a place in the boarding house of Swanage Grammer School. There he was greatly helped by an older boy who was leader of the Christian Union. A year later when the case of Dennis had to be considered, they wanted to put him in another school for lack of room in Swanage, but I pleaded with the officials in Dorchester and in the end the necessary arrangement was made and we were very grateful. Because our income was modest the

state grant was generous. That everything was arranged so happily we saw as another consequence of our family holiday in Swanage in 1947. Later, a woman we had first met on that holiday kindly agreed to have our two sons for their Christmas and Easter vacations at her farmhouse near Weymouth. This was another answer to prayer. We would probably not have known of her whereabouts had I not *happened to meet* the pastor of the Swanage Baptist Church in Parkstone. Just after that the Sunday School of our church invited us as a family to join them for their treat at Weymouth, thus providing us with the opportunity to find the farmhouse and make the arrangement. How graciously the Lord provided!

The blessing in Spain continued, especially in Valdepeñas. Doris got a fine Christian maid, Antonia, to help her with the house work and began a most effective ministry especially among the women and girls of the church. She did not usually accompany me on my itineraries so she was able to concentrate on Bible studies, visiting and the women's meeting. This latter soon grew in numbers and blessing and was supplemented by a weekly afternoon of prayer, when some two dozen women met in different homes to pray. Some of those women were not free to attend the weekly church prayer meeting. This great emphasis on prayer has continued in Valdepeñas over the years and is one reason why many regard that church as a model. My wife also organised a women's committee which was responsible for their meetings, for the visiting and the relief of those in need. All this has continued now for over thirty years.

Then my wife discovered that many of the girls were often free in the afternoons – the exceptions were at harvest time – the harvest of olives in January and February, the harvest of grain in the summer and the harvest of grapes in late September. She therefore started a Bible class at our home on Wednesday afternoons and ten girls attended. Most of these were seventeen and over. Later she started a second study for those a little younger and there were eight of those. These she kept up year after year and there are many fine Christian women today who look back with profound gratitude to God for what they learned in their formative years from “Doña Violetta” as they called her. She also had a class of boys for a time while I concentrated more on sporadic classes for preachers.

In those years the Valdepeñas church went forward by leaps and bounds, every year there were more conversions and baptisms. the chapel, which holds not more than one hundred and twenty seated, would soon have become inadequate if we had kept all our converts, but there was increasing unemployment in the agricultural zone and every year the gains and losses almost balanced themselves. I think it was thirteen that emigrated to Argentina, including the most gifted preacher, a schoolmaster. We were always sorry to see our friends go (some, we thought, could have stayed if they had been less ambitious) but there is no doubt that God used the migration to spread our blessings far and wide.

Percy Buffard and his wife paid their last visit to Spain in 1949. They were given a rapturous welcome and rejoiced to see what the Lord was doing. He helped me with the third preachers' course and gave some excellent expositions and devotional messages. But he could not stand to preach longer than five minutes, so his contribution, very valuable as it was, had to be limited to Bible studies and counseling. He was in Valdepeñas for three months. Returning home, his health gradually deteriorated, Parkinson's disease set in and the Lord called him home in 1958. But

some years before that happened we had the joy of welcoming his son, Frank – with Margaret and their little son – to share in the work which his father had founded. It took a year or two for him to master the language, but they fitted in very well and in time he was able to take my place. Looking back, we can see that the Lord called me to be a little link between father and son and we cannot but praise God for a half a century of harmonious co-operation.

But with the increase of blessing came the increase of opposition, inspired by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Year after year we were plagued with all sorts of problems; some were of an internal nature but by far the most were through the intolerance of the authorities. Here is one example which I believe I had to grapple with before Percy Buffard's visit. I received a heart-rending letter from a Christian woman living in the mountains on the edge of our area. I do not know how the gospel reached her in that remote region but she was certainly converted and, because she allowed a gospel meeting to be held in her home, she was deprived of her employment as a post-woman. Then a relative who was a nun invited her daughter, aged 15, to spend a few weeks with her in the convent. This would bring some relief to her mother who was in a precarious situation and the girl could learn fancy sewing and other skills. The mother, all unsuspecting, gave her permission. But when after a few weeks she visited her daughter she found that the girl's mind had been poisoned against her and that she had been persuaded to sign an appeal for protection to the "Tribunal For the Protection of Minors", whose function was the care of the children of criminals. The Mother Superior told her that the girl could not be released without written instructions from the Tribunal. Mother and daughter were never allowed to speak alone, but the girl realised that she had been deceived and wanted to come home.

In great anguish of heart the woman tried to find someone who could help her and she somehow got my address in Valdepeñas. Fortunately this happened before the schoolmaster had gone to Argentina so, while the burden was shared in the prayer meeting he undertook to write to her, advising her how she could make claim for the release of her daughter. The woman did all she was told and got no reply. We contacted a solicitor who took the matter up but got no reply, or at least we got no reply from him. The correspondence continued for weeks and it seemed that the solicitor did not dare to do anything against the authority of "Holy Mother Church". At last I wrote as a foreigner and I believe that I mentioned that I was having the injustice published in England. At long last the girl was freed and when I announced the joyful news at our prayer meeting I remember some of the mothers present wept for joy! There is a happy sequel to that story, for while in the convent the girl had learned to play the organ. Later she married a pastor and played in the evangelical church in Tarragona, and now it is her son, David, who recently joined our Mission in Valdepeñas!

Another case of oppression was not dealt with so easily or so successfully. It concerned our little hill-top church of Chiclana where I had seen so much blessing. After the hall had been opened we received the news that the mayor had forbidden the singing of hymns. I went to see him and told him that in all Spain where we had a place registered for worship we were allowed to sing, it was an integral part of our worship. He replied that we were only allowed private worship and it was not private if the hymns could be heard outside. I told him that I was going to hold a meet-



ing and sing a solo and that he could punish me according to the law. I knew he would have to be careful about what he did to a man with a British passport. We held our meeting, I played the little organ and sang. But the young fellows of Catholic Action were outside: they seemed so hostile that the door was locked against them. They then cut the electric wire and plunged us all in darkness. A candle was lit and I continued preaching.

The Mayor had also told us that when we left the meeting we should not go down the street in groups because "a Protestant procession was illegal"! Thus it was that after the meeting my wife and I found ourselves waylaid by the fellows of Catholic Action. I confess that I was so nervous that I could scarcely say a word in Spanish but what I tried to say was: "If I am doing wrong, report me to the Governor and let him punish me according to law." Our friends soon caught us up and I urged them not to stop to argue and we got away. Two nights later the little hall was ransacked by the Catholic fellows, and a few weeks after that they laid an ambush on the open road to beat up one of our young evangelists, but the Lord arranged a delay and he escaped their hands. Later still, the little congregation was accused of shouting "Down with Franco! Death to the Roman Catholic Church!" – they did hear shouts but they came from outside their hall. On the basis of that false accusation the hall was closed for eleven years and our friends were so intimidated that even house meetings were stopped.

At the end of 1949 the blows fell on our own work in Valdepeñas. The trouble began with a note from the mayor forbidding the holding of our Sunday School. At our church meeting I told our people never to mention the words "Sunday School" again. That should be banished from our vocabulary, but we should continue on Sunday afternoons with a Children's Meeting. Then the captain of the Civil Guard began to call up our members for interrogation. When a woman was called my wife always accompanied her, and I did the same for at least one of the men. Then the Captain tried to close the church. We passed through some very anxious weeks, but by a timely visit to the provincial authorities we were just saved. I presented our petition to the Secretary of the Governor and said: "I presume we can continue while this is being considered?" He replied, "I think so," and those few words saved us!

The next blow fell on the orphanage, an insignificant effort of Christian charity run by our Spanish deaconess, Irene Perez, with nine little children of the evangelical community whose parents or nearest relatives were living in deep poverty. Irene had carried it on for about five years with "no visible means of support" on exactly the same principles as Muller's orphanage. Though she worked under the auspices of our Mission she was entirely independent. I had offered the formation of a committee to give it standing in the eyes of the churches and people in England, but she said it was not necessary. Her faith was often greatly tried, but the Lord always sent just enough for her to carry on.

My wife and I accompanied Irene when the Captain sent for her. He showed us the typed instructions to the police to take the children and put them in state (Roman Catholic) institutions. He gave her less than a fortnight to disperse the children or he said the police would act. It was within a few weeks of Christmas and Irene pleaded to be allowed to keep the children over the festive season. The man was adamant and I had to take one girl to the mining town to stay with her uncle.

One little boy Irene kept as he was her great nephew and neither his mother nor grandmother (Irene's sister) were fit to look after him.' (I shall have more to say of him on another page.)

For several months the captain carried on a war of nerves against us. I said to him once: "You are like a lion going mouse-hunting; we are a very peaceable community." In due course he found I was right and even sent for one of our men to let him know that he had found his suspicions of him had been groundless. When I heard that he was to be moved, I sent him a New Testament (a Catholic version) and said I hoped he would find the same blessings in it as I had done.

It was about a year after that when my wife had a very unpleasant encounter with the authorities. She went with a Spanish woman to the little town of Cozar, about 20 miles away, to visit a small group of believers. A few days previously I had been there and had even held a house meeting with the full knowledge of the mayor, so they did not expect much trouble. They had paid a few visits when they were hauled before the mayor and the priest, and accused of disturbing the peace of the place. The Spanish woman was locked up and they told my wife that the police would escort her to the edge of the town after which she must make her way home as best she could. She refused to walk 20 miles in the dark, so she was brought home in a car by three men who demanded that I should pay for the petrol. That was an outrage that the British Embassy was able to take up and we heard later that the mayor had been deposed.

In those years our people were treated as second class citizens. A girl was turned out of school for not reciting prayers to the Virgin Mary, and one of our evangelists taught her to read and write. Another girl was punished in school for not going to Mass: when the others went out to play she had to stay in, standing with arms outstretched, making the sign of the cross.

We had problems over funerals. Our dead could never be buried in the cemetery, that was "holy ground", but in the annexe, an enclosed wilderness wherein were buried the criminals, the suicides and the Protestants. That was the only place where we were allowed to preach in the open air, and I had several good opportunities – standing on a heap of rubble, preaching the gospel of the risen Christ. We had such a good opportunity in Valdepeñas on one occasion that the event was talked about. The authorities then stepped in and forbade the holding of any service whatsoever in the annexe. That lasted for years. It is true that we could preach the gospel in the house where the person had died, provided the head of the house did not object. In order to prevent this gospel witness there were several painful incidents when our dying members were visited by the priest to try to persuade them to return to "Holy Mother Church" and so prevent an evangelical funeral with its public witness to our faith.

Our young couples were refused the right of legal matrimony if one of the partners had been christened as a Roman Catholic in infancy. I discovered that even Protestant parents had had their children christened by the priest because in the years of the worst oppression they could not get a milk ration without a certificate from the priest. If a couple were only married in our church neighbours would say they were "living in sin", the husband could not get a married wage and any children were regarded as illegitimate. We had to appeal to the judge for this elemental right. It was expensive and always took time – the worst case I knew took about

four years.

Our young men conscripted into the army were often imprisoned for refusing to kneel before the "host" at a military Mass. One man was sentenced to three years though he was released after about eighteen months. A few yielded out of fear while others were exempted by a reasonable commander. When they were called up we gave them a certificate as members of an Evangelical Church and this should have secured the exemption of them all.

We had to be cautious about giving out tracts, we did do it, but with discretion and usually only one at a time. In one hotel I got friendly with two secret policemen and gave them a tract to show them what we believed. They showed a little interest and called me "Padre". Our people often suffered in the matter of employment but in some cases their known integrity saved them from being sacked.

The worst case of oppression that we had to deal with was that of Moses, Irene's great nephew whom she kept with her after the other children had had to be dispersed. He stayed with her until he was ten and then she sent him to the Lutheran boarding school in Madrid where all the brightest children of our community were educated. This school was unofficial and only "winked at" because it was in the capital and run by Germans. No Protestant could get a good education in Valdepeñas. To that school the police were sent and the Director was forced to give the boy up: he was led away crying. Of course Irene went to Madrid, but the police would tell her nothing. The boy was made to sign a request for protection from the Tribunal for the Protection of Minors as was the girl mentioned earlier.

Later Irene was able to obtain a copy of the Resolution of the Tribunal in Madrid. It said, "Whereas the boy, Moses Campos, has no father nor mother capable of exercising a parent's right (his mother was mentally retarded) and as he has been handed over to persons belonging to a Protestant sect (his nearest relatives were evangelical christians) this Tribunal believes that it has the duty of protecting him and guaranteeing to him the right of being educated as a Christian .... If a corrupting example is a sufficient cause for the deprivation of parental rights it is a case of supreme corruption where a child is educated outside the Roman Catholic religion, which is the only true one and which he must profess for his eternal salvation .... It is decided that the boy should remain in the college where he is at the present time."

For two years Irene did not even know where he was although she did her best to get some information and many friends both in Spain and other countries were praying about the case. After some two years a friend in Valencia wrote informing her that she had discovered that Moses was being kept in St. Joseph's College in that city. Irene immediately made her way there and saw the Director. He refused to let her see him but as she went out of the front gate, there was the boy coming in with a priest! She only had time to kiss him and burst into tears before the priest drew him away and into the college.

A few weeks later the friend wrote again saying that she had found out that the boys of the school would be going on a certain day to a church in the city. Irene was persuaded not to go, but her niece, young and stronger, volunteered to go instead. She had lived with Irene in the orphanage and knew Moses well. She waited at the college gate and when the boys all came marching out she could not distinguish him among the crowd. When they reached the church they had to wait some minutes

outside and there she spotted him. He was one of those dressed up as a crusader. She was able to speak to him to reassure him that he was not forgotten and to give him some sweets, he told her that he would love to come back home but he knew that was not allowed. Before he was marched away she managed to take his photograph (see page 51 ). Later he was allowed out and he was able to go with his aunt for a meal at the house of a friend in the city.

Irene's lawyer pressed the case for the boy's return and it was considered by a second court but once more the decision was negative – nearest relatives were not fit persons to have him in charge because of their Protestant faith. A little later Moses himself wrote to his legal guardian asking for permission to visit his relatives during the summer vacation. This at last was granted, but when his dear old grandmother went to fetch him she found she had to sign a statement not to interfere in any way with his "catholic faith" which as a matter of fact was non-existent, for he could never forget the Christian love of his aunt. His legal guardian had tried to buy his affection with gifts, but the boy was not deceived.

At last, five long years after his abduction, he was released unconditionally. The battle had been long and very expensive, but help had come from Germany and the U. S. A. as well as from our friends in Britain. I believe that as a result of that victory all the Protestant children in Spain were safer. Irene did not find him easy to handle – his whole personality had been warped by what he had been through, but he made some kind of a profession of faith. Later the search for employment took him to the Barcelona region and since the death of his aunt we have lost contact. We have never heard of his joining an evangelical church, but the Lord answered prayer in delivering him from Rome and we believe that He will perfect what He has begun.

The opposition we suffered was also shared by Evangelical believers in other parts of the country. In the larger cities it was usually not so intense, but as late as 1956 the Madrid depot of the British and Foreign Bible Society was raided by the police who confiscated 900 Bibles, 10,000 New Testaments, several thousand Scripture portions and 25,000 other books. Even later came the closure of one of the largest churches in Barcelona. For some months they had to use a Brethren hall and hold their services at a less convenient hour. However, in spite of all the harrassments, the blessing of the Lord continued.

We had in Valdepeñas a steady stream of converts which just about counterbalanced our losses by migration, and even that the Lord used to spread our blessings. I have already mentioned that we lost one good preacher when he and his family emigrated to Argentina. When that happened I was glad that his brother-in-law, Don Joaquin Casado, another school teacher, had recently returned to Valdepeñas after some years absence. While away he had compromised his position by attending Mass in order, as he said, to be able to exercise his profession and save his mother from starving. We, whose faith has never been so fiercely tested, could scarcely blame him, but the church could not accept him as a preacher at first. We helped him with mission funds and he began to help me with my correspondence and earned a little by beekeeping. I realized his potentialities and before long he was allowed by the elders to speak at the prayer meeting. Then he received an invitation to follow his brother-in-law to Argentina and, although I could not invite him to become a full-time worker in the Mission, I begged him to stay for the sake of the Lord's work. After a few weeks of indecision, he agreed to stay for two years and

by that time, if I remember rightly, the prospects in Argentina were fading.

Don Joaquin was the only well-educated man in the church and his help when I had to deal with the authorities was enormous. Moreover, he soon showed considerable preaching ability and he profited from my preachers' courses. His was the task to type out all the applications for civil matrimony, and in the many struggles against oppression he took the lead in presenting our case to the authorities. Later, when I was asked to adapt the Scripture Union notes for Spanish readers, his advice on the vocabulary was invaluable and he typed out the final copies. He and I worked happily together for twenty years and he could always be trusted to give the Spanish point of view, so that neither the church nor the Mission could be accused of being foreign in its outlook or methods. I realize now how much more difficult it would have been for me if I had not had him at my side. It is true that the church members tended to put my wife and me "on a pedestal", but neither he nor his wife ever showed any resentment of that fact. For the last few years they have been in the mining town of Puertollano where, in spite of their age, they are carrying on a difficult task. We praise God for their faithfulness.

In the course of the years several other young Spaniards joined us, some only giving part of their time. In addition to Frank Buffard and myself there were usually four to six Spaniards in the work, some with wives and families. As time went on it was natural for me to leave most of the country work to the Spaniards so my varied experiences with donkeys and mules grew less frequent. Later, some of our workers accepted invitations to pastorates in other parts of Spain. We were always sorry to see them go, but they invariably went to meet another need and we had no reason to doubt that they had been guided by the Lord.

I continued with the annual Bible courses for young men. In 1951 twenty attended and the following year I decided to have two, one for those more advanced and another for beginners. That year we had a rainy spring (to the delight of our people) so, in view of the cost of feeding all those hungry young men, I made an appeal from the pulpit for help in kind. The response was far greater than I had dared to expect. The people were so grateful to God for the increase of their crops that year that they brought a chicken, a rabbit, three dozen eggs, oil, beans, dried peas, rice, 20 large loaves, lettuces, radishes and more potatoes than the young men could eat!

The next year, in view of my wife's success with her Bible studies, we decided to have a Bible course for girls so that those from other places could share our blessings. Thirteen came the first year, plus about a dozen local girls, and the numbers tended to increase from year to year. In these courses my wife laid a good deal of emphasis on running a Christian home, beginning with marrying the right young man and ending with such home hints as the use of a clinical thermometer – which was quite new to some of them. All the instruction was Bible based and she used some of the same methods of study as I had done with the young men. The girls tended to be rather noisy and I was sometimes nervous lest the neighbours should complain and bring the police on us. It is true that one year a policeman did pay us a visit but he was too late to see our visitors. When the young folk arrived at the beginning of a course I used to say that we had no rules but the rule of love, but they needed to realize how easily that rule could be broken, for instance, by making a noise when someone else was wanting to sleep.

I have a note that in the year 1956 we had forty eight young people at the three courses. Before then Irene had left Valdepeñas and Frank and Margaret Buffard with their two children had taken up residence in the mission house. Some of the young people said they learned a lot by seeing what a really Christian home was like. Naturally these courses entailed a lot of domestic work, but there were two women of the church who gladly gave their services for those few weeks. There was a fourth time when the house was full, and that was at Easter when we invited the isolated believers scattered in various places to come and spend four days with us and enjoy our hospitality and the special services. We sometimes had ten or twelve of these, of various ages and both sexes.

In the year 1953 I became conscious of a gap in the local work among the young people. My wife had her weekly Bible classes – the girls now getting older – and there was a healthy Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour which ran itself and met the need of those in their late teens and early twenties. But there seemed to be a gap between this society and the Sunday school. It was this which led us to the formation of the Intermediate C.E. Society for girls and boys from ten to sixteen. I started this weekly in our home with the assistance of two girls aged twenty and eighteen. The elder one acting as leader (she is a pastor's wife now) and the younger one as Secretary and Treasurer. I acted as pianist and general supervisor, getting the work well started so that they could carry on when I was away. We had hymns and choruses and the learning of texts. Birthdays were celebrated by the singing of a birthday chorus, a short prayer, usually by one of the children, and the presentation of a birthday card, the handiwork of the Society's artist, a boy of fourteen. In the early days I usually gave an address but as the work developed I found that the children were able to take a greater part themselves with the two leaders. One innovation was an object service when the children brought objects mentioned in the Bible and in several cases gave a short address on them. They found so much to say that between them and the two helpers all the time was occupied and I left my object for another week. On other occasions I asked them to bring texts containing a certain word and if possible speak on them. This turned out to be so popular that for some time it became the usual pattern of the meetings.

We held an especially good meeting the day before Good Friday when, out of the sixteen children present, fifteen read verses on the death of Christ and ten gave brief comments. In April, when the fields around the town were adorned with wild flowers, I suggested that we had a flower service and that halfway through we should transfer the meeting to the home of a Sunday School teacher who was confined to her bed, lying on her back for three months. There were eighteen of us that day and so many of the children sat on a bed in the sick room that it gave way! However I learned that it was easily put right afterwards. Each child in turn brought his or her gift of flowers to the table in the centre of the room, read the text attached and about six added brief comments. I do not know who got more pleasure out of that meeting, the patient who received the flowers or the children who gave them. Quite a number of those children are now fathers and mothers and faithfully teaching their little ones the Word of the Lord.

In the autumn of 1956 Doris suffered a bad attack of German measles and this delayed our return to Spain. By November she was sufficiently recovered to be left but not to return herself, so I went on my own and she stayed until after the boys

Christmas vacation. Through the years this happened several times, but she was always able to join me in the spring in time to conduct the girls' Bible Course – her unique and much appreciated contribution to the work. While in Spain on my own I must confess to periods of depression and inward conflict, but the Lord sustained me and my Spanish friends were very kind. Again and again I used to tell myself, "My feelings do not matter, what matters is what I do".

On one occasion it was news from home that upset me. Doris wrote that she was not at all well and the doctor had warned her that she might not be able to rejoin me at the appointed time, furthermore she was worried about the boys at boarding school. Her news lay on my heart like a heavy weight all day until 8.30 in the evening when the burden suddenly lifted. I felt sure that someone was praying for me and I was encouraged.

In 1958 I heard of the existence of the Federation of Independent Evangelical Churches of Spain with its headquarters in Barcelona. I therefore made it my business to visit the city and, while taking part in some meetings arranged by the Spanish Evangelical Alliance, I was given hospitality in the home of the worthy President of the Federation, Don Jose Maria Martinez, pastor of one of the largest churches in the city and one of the most able of the Spanish Evangelical leaders. From him I learned a great deal about the Federation and I realized that it was fulfilling a function which the Alliance could not undertake and, furthermore, that it was a sound and responsible movement similar to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches in England of which I was a personal member. I believed that it would be advantageous for our churches to be linked together in a national movement and not merely in a foreign mission. Then, if at some future time, the links with Britain should be broken, or our Mission cease to exist, the little churches in our area, always weakened by migration, would have the help of the stronger churches in the Barcelona area. The following year I visited all our churches and persuaded them to join the Federation. A few years later it was our pleasure in Valdepeñas, to act as hosts to the Annual Assembly, and from that time I think our area has never failed to send a representation to the Assembly. The Federation receives help from similar movements in Europe and at times they have helped us to maintain our work and to improve our Mission-house as a very useful centre for small conferences or Bible schools. At the time of writing Frank Buffard is on the committee of the Federation – the only non-Spaniard thus honoured.

There was a time when our membership of the Federation proved to be of crucial importance, and that was in 1968, a year after the law had been changed in our favour. We had been offered great liberties provided that we registered with the Government. Many of us went to the Annual Assembly feeling that we should refuse to register. We had, with the blessing of God, functioned outside the law for years and we did not see why we should disclose to any government official the details of our constitution, membership and finance. But at the Assembly we had the expert advice of the Secretary of the United Protestant Defence Commission, the man who had been representing us to the Government, and he convinced us that we had nothing to fear, but a good deal to gain, by registering. Thus it happened that while there was disarray in many Protestant denominations, some registering and others refusing, we all "towed the line" and immediately began to enjoy the greater liberties conceded by the law.

The value of registration was illustrated by something that happened later to a Brethren Assembly in Galicia. They discovered that within driving distance there was a village of 3,500 people who were in open rebellion against the church authorities but were still religious enough to want to pray. What an opportunity for the gospel! They had had a very good priest. He had refused payment from poor people for Masses, christenings, marriages and funerals, he had cultivated the land adjoining his church and distributed the produce among the poorest families. He had won the hearts of all by his kindness. Suddenly he was removed to a distant parish and the people believed that this was because the priests in the area were jealous and had complained to the bishop. They sent a deputation to the bishop to ask for their priest back, and as they got no satisfaction they boycotted the church. Their attitude was so firm and unanimous that the priest appointed to fill the vacancy found that no one would give him lodging and as there was no presbytery he was forced to live in another place and travel to fulfil his duties. Only five to ten attended his services, but the rest were not irreligious, they thronged the cemetery on Sunday afternoons to recite their prayers. Hearing of the existence of the Gospel Hall within driving distance some hired a coach to attend the services there from time to time. The Brethren Assembly realized that this was an unusual opportunity so they hired the cinema in the village and announced a meeting. Something like a thousand people thronged the place and then, at the last moment, the civil guard found out that the Brethren were not registered with the government and banned the meeting! This was reported in the Spanish Evangelical magazine "Restauracion".



*Moises, the kidnapped boy,  
dressed as a Crusader*



*Bible Course for Girls*



# After the Second Vatican Council

# 7

The Second Vatican Council was, I should say, the most significant and far-reaching event in the European religious scene of this century. It was conceived and inaugurated by Pope John XXIII, a kindly man. He opened it on October 11th 1962 and it was eventually closed by Pope Paul VI in November 1964. It was that Council, more than anything else (although there were other factors) that brought religious liberty to Spain.

The aim of the Council was not to bring the Roman Catholic Church nearer to the New Testament – for in some ways she is farther away than ever, for instance in the increasing exaltation of Mary, the mother of Christ. Pope John's aim, clearly stated, was not to go back to the first century but to make his church more up to date and more in line with the twentieth century, and, as far as possible to bring about the unity of Christendom.

The rise of the ecumenical movement among the Protestant churches afforded a great opportunity to Rome. The basis of the Reformation was the Bible and if many of the churches in Protestant lands had lost their faith in the Bible what was to hinder their coming under the Roman banner? Mainly one thing: the image of a 16th century, persecuting church. So the Council seriously set itself to clean up that image.

The assembled prelates made a surprising declaration on religious liberty, which was carried against the opposition of the Spanish bishops. When I read that declaration in the Spanish newspaper I could scarcely believe my eyes! I said: "This is all we have been asking for these twenty five years!" It naturally caused surprise and disquiet in Spain and, to calm people's fears, there was a good deal of explanation in the Catholic press that "Holy Mother Church" had not altered her aims (of universal conquest), only her methods.

Never in all history had Rome presented such a document. As in so many matters, she was centuries behind the Protestant churches who based their doctrine and practice directly on the New Testament. As a result of that Council the people of Spain were told to call us "separated brethren" instead of "cursed heretics" and "wolves in sheep's clothing".

But let no one imagine that Rome was willing to give way on any important doctrinal issue. She was chained to her rather unworthy past by her doctrine of infallibility, as is shown by the clauses on "Ecumenicity" in the Council. The Council declared: "It is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the all-embracing means of salvation, that the fulness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the Apostolic College alone, of which Peter is the Head, that we believe our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who already belong in any way to God's people" (Documents of Vatican II, W. Abbott, S.J. p. 346). This is truly a masterpiece of vague language. There is the admission that we might, "in some way, belong to God's people" (perhaps they mean we really belong to the Roman Church without knowing it!) But for all that, we remain outside "the all-embracing means of salvation", and are deprived of any part in the blessings of the New Covenant. In other words, they feel chained to what they pre-

viously declared, that "outside of the Catholic Church there is no salvation".

We note the arrogant claim that "all the blessings of the New Covenant" have been entrusted to Rome. We have a right to examine these blessings to see whether she has been faithful in dispensing them. This Covenant was foretold in Jeremiah 31. 33-34 and declared in Hebrews 8. 10-12. Three blessings are mentioned: (1) God would write His laws on men's hearts, (2) they would have personal knowledge of Him and (3) their sins and iniquities He would remember no more.

Even before He had given His life for our sins our Lord began to dispense the blessings of the New Covenant. He told the harlot who repented and bathed His feet with her tears: "Your sins are forgiven ... your faith has saved you, go in peace" (Luke 7. 48 and 50). he said the same thing to the paralyzed man carried by four companions (Mark 2. 5). Peter preached on the day of Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven" (Acts 2. 38), while the Apostle Paul declared that "Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses" (Acts 13. 38/39), and he wrote to the believers in Ephesus: "in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace" (Eph. 1.7) – not the poverty of your penances and good works. He says almost the same thing to the believers in Colosse (Col. 1. 14). The Apostle John writes: "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness". (1 John 1.9) The benefits of the New Covenant were offered by the Apostles to every sinner who repented and trusted the Saviour.

Now, how has Rome dispensed the benefits of the New Covenant? I have in my possession the weekly bulletin of the Catholic Church of our Lady Immaculate in Westbourne, Bournemouth, dated September 17th 1977, thirteen years after the Vatican Council. It announces that the following day would be the anniversary of the death of Friar Bartholemew Vela, former priest of that parish and that a special Mass would be said at 11 a.m. Then follows the "Prayer for the faithful departed": "Oh God, creator and Redeemer of all the faithful grant to the soul of Friar Bartholemew Vela the remission of all his sins, that through our pious supplication he may obtain the pardon which he has always desired who livest and reignest world without end Amen". Poor priest! After probably twelve years training for the priesthood and hearing many people's confessions, he died without any assurance of the forgiveness promised so specifically in the New Covenant. And his successor is equally ignorant and he imagines that the "pious supplication" of a few sinners could possibly afford relief to that condemned soul. Moreover this happened not in darkest Spain or Italy, but in a town like Bournemouth where the gospel is preached from a dozen pulpits. Poor priests! Poor parishioners! – dying in their sins without any assurance of forgiveness because "Holy Mother Church" has arrogated to herself the power to deny to sinners the blessings Christ died to give free to everyone who repents and trusts in Him. Even the poor harlot who bathed the Saviour's feet with her tears could teach you a lesson!

In Rome there is a wonderful cathedral called St. Peter's; it is stately and admired by many. Where did the finance necessary to erect that great edifice come from? History tells us that Pope Leo X declared an indulgence by which, on the payment of money, people could not be forgiven their sins, but they could have some release

or mitigation of the fearful pains that awaited them in a place called purgatory. Being in ignorance of the Word of God they paid up, and the proceeds were used for the building of that great cathedral. Protestants have been tempted to call it a symbol of a gigantic swindle, but we could not say that there was wilful deceit, for in those dark days a man could become Pope without a knowledge of the Bible.

Poor Catholics! We know that you are ashamed of the doings of your church in the Middle Ages, why allow yourselves to be bound by the fetters forged in those days of corruption? Can you really believe that the Lord Jesus would limit His pardon by what a man could pay? Read the New Testament; don't go to the priest, go to the Lord Jesus Himself; confess your sins to Him and ask Him to forgive you in the same way as He did the harlot and the thief on the cross. Surrender yourselves to Him, and ask Him to write His law on your hearts. Then, as you trust in His power to save you, rejoice that, according to the New Covenant, "your sins are remembered no more"

Rome has twisted the message of the gospel and shows herself unfaithful in her ministry to sinful men and women. People in Britain who have never seen undiluted Romanism have no idea of what they owe to the Reformation unless they study history. All that is good in the Vatican Council has come from the Reformation and the influence of the countries that embraced it. We must never forget that Rome tried to crush the Reformation by force of arms and the consequences if she had succeeded do not bear thinking about. How could anyone believe that the church responsible for the Inquisition was infallible? – and if she was not infallible then what right has she to say that she is infallible now? If people in this country realized the great blessings we have inherited from the Reformation they would never talk about trying to reverse it.

The point I am trying to make is well illustrated by the story of an ex-priest, Don Francisco, who belonged to our Mission before the Civil War. I have referred to his death in prison in chapter 3. The story of his life was told by Mr. Percy Buffard in our magazine of January 1942. His training for the priesthood began when his parents sent him at the early age of 9 to a seminary for his education. It was their choice that he should become a priest. There he studied for 14 years, but he had no religious aspirations, and the priesthood for him was just a means of livelihood.

In due course he was put in charge of a parish and on one occasion he found a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society distributing tracts and Scriptures in his parish. He had been taught that such people were spreading heresy so, with the help of the mayor, he took all the literature the man had and burnt it before his face. Before leaving the colporteur said, "I will pray for you". The incident soon faded from the priest's mind as his difficulties increased.

Falling in love with a woman, he found the strain of celibacy more than he could bear and, unlike most of his fellow priests who kept their love affairs secret, he lived openly with the woman of his choice. In due time they had four children and the scandal became known to the bishop who ordered him to abandon his children. This would have condemned them to be put in an orphanage where they would most likely die of neglect. (At that time the death rate in such places was appalling.) His wife was advised to enter a convent, or, as a concession, stay with him but call herself his niece or his siter-in-law. He felt he could not abandon his children so he was first transferred to a place where he could not earn enough to feed his family,

the bishop hoping that he would be driven by sheer necessity to submit, but he continued steadfast in his resolve and he was first suspended and then condemned.

He suffered years of struggle, living in deep poverty and so ashamed of the public disgrace that he stayed indoors as much as possible. Searching for an escape from boredom he remembered that he had a Bible which, during his 14 years of study, he had never read. It was in six volumes. he opened one at random and his eyes fell on 1 Tim. 3. 12. To his astonishment he read that the Word of God did not condemn but rather recommended the marriage of the ministers of the church. This came as a new revelation. Straightway he believed it and went quickly to the next room almost shouting to his wife, "we are not condemned!" At first she thought that he had gone mad, but he read the passage to her and for about 15 minutes they stood as if hypnotised, then, weeping, they knelt before the open Bible in contrition and gratitude. As they were kneeling there in the presence of God there flashed into his mind the words he had repeated in Latin almost every day: "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin". He had never thought about what they meant before. He repeated them to his wife in Spanish, they both believed instantly and received the forgiveness which only God can give. They accepted the New Covenant. He put off his clerical robes, his excommunication was published and he was turned out of his home.

There followed a period of persecution and privation until years later he was invited to join our mission. One day as he gave his testimony at a meeting he was surprised to see a man in tears, at the end this man told him that he was the colporteur whose Scriptures he had burnt. He wept for joy to see the answer to his prayer. Don Francisco could not remember him, but the two rejoiced together. He became a very effective preacher of the gospel as I well remember.

This true story, similar to hundreds more that could be told, illustrates the misery and heart-ache inflicted by the implacable rule of an unscriptural tyranny, and the tremendous relief when a soul in bondage to man-made rules comes to the knowledge of the truth. As the Lord Jesus said to the Jews who believed on Him: "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8.32). Those early disciples found themselves progressively liberated from the man-made rules and regulations of the mechanical religion in which they had been brought up, and, after Pentecost, experienced that: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (II Cor. 3.17).

Now the Roman Church has no conception of this liberty, so in all the countries where she has had power she has not hesitated to bully people into submission. Our long years of oppression in Catholic Spain confirm this fact. The idea of using force to make people "Christian" seems to have started in the days of the Roman emperor Constantine who is alleged to have seen a cross in the sky and heard a voice saying, "By this sign conquer". The teaching he had received from the professed church leaders of those days was so defective that, instead of remembering that the cross was the symbol of sacrificial love, he imagined he could use it for a bloody conquest to create a "Christian empire". It would have been better for the church if he had been defeated for, with a professing Christian in the seat of power, people naturally made a profession for mixed motives and the church became more corrupt than ever. Thus the idea of making people "Christian" by force has permeated and corrupted the thinking of the hierarchical church ever since. That was their justifica-

tion of the tortures of the Inquisition.

Connected with this error was another even more fundamental – that conversion was a sacrament rather than a change of heart by the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus people could be intimidated into accepting the rite and submitting to the rule of the priest. Moors were “converted” in Spain at the edge of the sword. Roman Catholics may say that their sacrament is really a spiritual rebirth. If that were true then there would not be a disproportionate number of Catholics in our prisons and the I. R. A. would be outside the Catholic Church.

A lot can be learned by comparing the reactions of two oppressed minorities – Evangelicals in Spain and Romanists in Northern Ireland. Both felt themselves oppressed and the previous chapters of this book are evidence enough of the oppression suffered by our brothers in Spain. The minority in Northern Ireland reacted by protest marches which became increasingly violent – stones, then petrol bombs, incendiary bombs, high explosives and murder. The minority in Spain sent polite letters of protest to the Spanish authorities, not once did they descend to violence. (The terrorists of the E. T. A. are Catholics living in the most Catholic region of Spain). Why this contrast? It is because the Evangelicals of Spain were taught to take their rules of conduct direct from the Word of God. In contrast to this the Vatican Council, though recommending a more tolerant attitude, has left the theological roots of her intolerance untouched.

The Papacy is still a spiritual dictatorship never dreamed of in the days of the Apostles and wholly alien to the letter and spirit of the New Testament. An illustration of this came to light in January 1980 when five priests were married in a Catholic church in Cordoba. Some two years previously these men had come to the conclusion that the unnatural yoke of celibacy, imposed by their superiors, was more than they could bear, especially as each found a young lady he wanted to marry. They therefore applied to the Pope for a dispensation but got no reply. At long last, after much heart-searching and debating with the families concerned, they decided that they could wait no longer but they did not want to leave their church. They found so much sympathy from their fellow-priests that, in one of the churches of the city, they were able to have a Mass with the marriage ceremony in which nine other priests took part. They made their vows and exchanged rings according to custom. One of the couples had already contracted civil matrimony, which is now very much easier than it used to be, and the others were going to do so afterwards. This was reported in the daily newspaper “El Pais” which added the news that in the previous months no less than one hundred priests had contracted civil matrimony in Spain.

This shows that behind the smiling face of a modern Pope with a good T. V. image there remains an implacable tyranny. Within the vast domains of papal rule there must be thousands of people now suffering unspeakable, secret misery and on tenter-hooks of a problem of conscience because, when they were young and impressionable they were brain-washed into taking unnatural and unnecessary vows. They cannot go direct to God, confess their mistake and walk out free – oh no! In all the world there is only one person who could give them release and he chooses not to answer. The next Pope may be kinder but it is the tyrannical system that is so wrong. People who are fascinated by the gorgeous and elaborate ritual of Romanism, and bewitched by the sight of a smiling Pope, surrounded by myriads,

need to know that he represents an implacable and unscriptural tyranny.

Those who doubt this should read "I Leap Over the Wall" by Monica Baldwin. As a Roman Catholic she writes to defend the convent system but her own experience, which she relates with entertaining candour, belies her theory. After hearing the headmistress of her catholic boarding school expatiate on the awesome excellences of the monastic vocation she became obsessed with the idea of becoming a nun. At seventeen years of age she made her great decision – though some thirty years later she admits that she was partly influenced by the desire to avoid home responsibilities. She passed through the preliminary stages and in due course took the veil. It was not until she had endured ten long years of monastic life that she began to wonder whether she had made a mistake, but she naturally fought against the very idea, believing it to be sinful. At last, after eighteen more years – twenty eight in all of increasing misery, she came to the conclusion that – to use her own words: "I was no more fitted to be a nun than an acrobat".

She then had to present her petition for release to her Mother Superior who, in due course had it examined by the ecclesiastical authorities. After they had considered her case and found it valid, they sent it to Rome, where once more it was carefully investigated. This waiting time must have been extremely trying for her. In the end, they released her and she emerged to find herself hopelessly ill-prepared to face life in war-time Britain. This true story, told by a Roman Catholic who does her best to justify her church, illustrates how far Rome, by her inveterate legalism, has drifted from the simple organization, the customs and loving atmosphere pervading the New Testament churches.

This rather controversial digression from my story is, I feel, necessary because in these days so many people are being attracted by the pomp and show, the grandeur and organization of Rome with little opportunity of knowing the darker side of its operations. The man who wants to be a true Christian should go back to the simplicity of the New Testament.

Before describing how the Vatican Council brought religious liberty to Spain I should first summarize the situation in Spain when the Council began its work. At that time non-catholic religious bodies were allowed private worship but there could be no public advertisement of their existence, not even a name or a sign outside a building – furthermore, the building itself could not be open for worship without official permission and that was often denied. The printing and distribution of Protestant literature was banned. Young believers wanting to get married had to fight a costly legal battle – sometimes taking years – if one of the parties happened to have been christened by the priest, as was often the case. Our young men called up for compulsory military service were frequently punished if they refused to kneel at the elevation of the "Host" at a military Mass. No non-catholic could be buried in the cemetery but only in the annexe, an enclosed wilderness or rubbish dump reserved for the interment of criminals and suicides. Protestant schools were banned and Protestant children were sometimes punished for not attending Mass. As non-catholic religious bodies had no legal status, their chapels and other buildings had to be registered in private names which could cause complications when the legal owner died. How does this situation compare with that of Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland?

The Vatican Council came to an end in 1964 and by that time many of its resolu-

tions had been published and the Spanish press was preparing the people for changes. It was providential that Spain then had a very broadminded and capable Foreign Minister, Don Fernando Maria Castiella, who was well acquainted with the unfavourable impression made in other countries by the religious monopoly in his country. It is clear that Franco himself wanted a change. His government had been keeping a watchful eye on the tiny, inoffensive groups of Evangelical believers for over twenty years, and it was obvious that they had no political aspirations, let alone plots against authority. It was the Roman Catholic hierarchy that so strongly opposed religious liberty and now their intolerant attitude had been discredited by the Vatican Council.

Franco wanted to give his country a more attractive image in the eyes of the world as the Vatican Council had done for their church. Before there was any change in the law he authorised his ambassador in the United States to declare that Spain would have religious liberty in the near future. Then, in a broadcast message to his people, he urged them not to fear such a change, assuring them that "Holy Mother Church could defend her own". In September 1964, a few months before the end of the Council, I was able to report that most of the churches that had, on one pretext or another, been closed were now re-opened and that the authorities in different places were beginning to show more toleration.

However, at the same time, the Roman hierarchy were still fighting a "rearguard action" against change and, as late as 1966, they were reminding people that, in spite of what had been said in the Vatican Council, "the Catholic unity of Spain was a treasure that must be lovingly maintained". It is significant that in catholic countries the movement towards a more charitable attitude to dissidents has come, not from the hierarchy, but the laity. The hierarchy leads when it is a matter of discipline or "the rights of the Church", the laymen lead when it is a matter of charity. In other words, speaking generally, the laymen are nearer a Christ-like spirit than their leaders and that, in an organization where there is the greatest emphasis on obedience to human authorities.

In the same year the Spanish newspapers made much of the visit of Archbishop Fisher of Canterbury to the Pope. This was interpreted as the surrender of the Protestant churches to Rome. Soon after this happened the re-opened Protestant school in our part of Spain was visited by an inspector. He found everything in order and then addressed the children, nearly all of Protestant parents, telling them that as the Archbishop of the Protestants had visited the Pope the Protestant churches would soon disappear.

It was providential that when the government was feeling its way towards granting us more liberty there was in being an official body representing the great majority of the non-catholic denominations in the country. Since the 1920s the various Evangelical bodies had met from time to time for conference and united testimony. Every year many of them observed the Evangelical Alliance week of prayer in January, and in places like Madrid, where there was more than one denomination, they would unite to pray together. But in 1954 they realized the need for united defence against the many acts of oppression to which they were subject, some of which were inconsistent with the law of the land. They therefore got together and formed the United Protestant Defence Commission with a full-time secretary, Don Jose Cardona Gregori, a Baptist pastor, who proved to be God's man for the

occasion. He started his work against a wall of opposition and I am sure that his patience was often greatly tried. But through his knowledge of Spanish law, his persistence, his personal charm and diplomacy he gained the goodwill of people in high places. The Government naturally found it to their advantage to deal with one responsible representative than ward off complaints from so many different quarters including foreign embassies.

One of our evangelists was once fined £30 for showing a filmstrip of the miracles of Jesus and preaching the gospel in a home. Senor Cardona took the matter up for us and the fine was reduced to £3. We often had to appeal to him to intervene in the efforts of our young people to obtain legal matrimony without going to a priest. On one occasion when I took a problem to his office in Madrid his wife phoned through to him in Alicante and, realizing that the matter was urgent, he did not go to bed that night but took the night train to our area in order to intervene in time. For years he was kept busy helping oppressed Christians all over the country, and nearly always he was successful in obtaining some mitigation of their sufferings.

As the implications of the Vatican Council became common knowledge there were two reactions, one favourable to us, the other hostile. In 1966 we reported that two of our churches had dared to display a sign-board outside their premises and the authorities had taken no action. In the same year our evangelist, Narciso, reported that pressure had been put on his schoolboy son to make him attend the Roman Catholic church for a rehearsal of the "first communion" which the others were going to take. When he protested to the headmistress she replied, "If your son is to remain here he must do everything that the other children do". When he told her of the Vatican Council and reminded her that Spanish law respected the right of parents in matters of religion, she said: "Unless the Pope himself sends me a special communication that I should exempt non-catholics from catholic teaching and practice I will not do it". He had to appeal to higher authorities, but it was very difficult for the boy, and within a few months he decided to leave our area. Some Catholics were glad to see us have more liberty: others, like that school-mistress, were furious.

In 1967 the foreign minister presented to the Spanish "Cortes" a bill on religious liberty based largely on the declarations of the Vatican Council. The Spanish bishops could scarcely oppose it but they could exercise much influence on the members of the house and 239 amendments were suggested. When the bill was finally passed it was not a law of liberty but rather of control. All the non-catholic religious associations (the word "church" was never used for non-catholics) should register with the government and they should present their financial statement and membership roll every year. It was not consistent with the resolutions of the Vatican Council.

However, Franco evidently had made up his mind that the law should not be applied rigidly. A Government Commission was appointed to prepare the regulations that would apply the law. This Commission consulted with the United Protestant Defence Commission who were surprised at the conciliatory attitude shown to them. In the end it turned out that nearly all the regulations were in our favour.

In the summer of 1968 I wrote in our mission magazine that we had "the greatest opportunity for thirty years" – all the closed churches had been re-opened, each dis-



playing its signboard. The problem of Protestant marriages had been solved, funeral services were now freely permitted and Protestant schools and bookshops could be opened. All this was very encouraging, but the burning question that had to be settled was whether our churches should register with the government or not.

At first, the general feeling among all denominations was that we should refuse to do so until the law was toned down to be more consistent with the statements of the Vatican Council. But we had no means of putting pressure on the Government, and, being Christians, we could not stoop to the violent methods of the Catholic I.R.A. and E.T.A. Don Jose Cardona, the man who had been representing us in discussion with the government, strongly advised registration saying that, in practice, we had nothing to lose and a great deal to gain, especially in the matter of public evangelism and extension work. Moved by this reasoning, the Federation of Free Churches, to which we belong, decided to register, which made it easy for the affiliated churches to do so as local sections of the Federation and enjoy the protection of the larger body in cases of difficulty. Thus it was that at a time when many churches still held back, we could enjoy the increasing liberty of action. Little by little the other churches, or the overwhelming majority, followed suit, but some held out for years.

At that time we had in Spain seven Spanish workers in the Mission, three of whom acted as a responsible Committee which made it easier for us missionaries to leave them on their own for a time. In this situation Frank and Margaret Buffard decided to spend a few years in England in order to help their two children over the difficult adolescent years, and to save Mission funds, Frank got a post as a school teacher and set up home in Gillingham, Kent. In December 1968 Doris and I were in Spain but expecting to come to England before Christmas for a few months deputation work greatly needed to sustain the work in Spain.

It was at this juncture that I received an urgent telephone call from Don Antonio Martinez, the Secretary of the Federation of Churches to which we belonged. He told me that he had come up against difficulties in the registration of the churches with the Government. The authorities had only given us a few weeks for this to be done and this meant that we must deal with it before we left for England. If we could quickly gather all our workers together he would come and guide us in the preparation of the indispensable documents. I broke the news to Doris as it would involve at least a day and a night's hospitality for our guests. It was inconvenient for her as her domestic helper was in hospital. But she took the news calmly – hospitality is an important part of missionary service.

I quickly got in touch with our workers and when Don Antonio arrived we were all gathered together. It was agreed that we should prepare all the documents and get them signed before we parted. Don Antonio said he was willing to keep at it until two o'clock in the morning if necessary. There were no forms for religious associations and this meant that we had to draw up the documents ourselves and word them carefully as a slip might have unforeseeable consequences. We sometimes complain at having to fill up forms but what a help they really are! Don Antonio had brought sample copies with him but these had to be carefully checked to see what did or did not apply to our work.

Soon two typewriters were busy and various workers were detailed to dictate and check the copies. It involved – among other things – drawing up a church con-

stitution – all in a few hours! We stopped for supper which, according to Spanish custom, had to be a main meal, and then resumed our work. It was the Lord's provision for Doris that one of the Spanish women in the church volunteered to help her. Finally, by one a. m. all was finished and signed and we were able to get to bed. Don Antonio had done a lot of the typing himself. Next morning he was up at 6.30 to catch a train for a committee meeting in Madrid. Next day two women came to help me wife with the washing and in the afternoon she was ironing twelve sheets! Four days later we were on the road, bound for England.

As time passed we were allowed increasing liberty but there were not wanting local authorities that tried to check the process. I used to say that Spain was not ruled by law but by the various interpretations of the law adopted by local authorities at different times. As late as 1972 we had an illustration of this fact. On Corpus Christi Day, a public holiday, Don Jose Gonzelez, then pastor of the Valdepeñas Church, decided to organize an excursion and an open air meeting at a local beauty spot some 5 miles away. According to the law, he informed the Governor of the province some weeks beforehand of his intention. To his surprise a reply was received allowing the picnic but not the meeting. He got in touch with Don Jose Cardona (Secretary of the United Protestant Defence Commission) in Madrid. Don Jose replied: "If you have given ten days notice you are within your rights to hold the meeting and, if you wish, I will come and join you".

I was hoping to be present, but I realized that I was not needed and I was called away to visit a village in the south. All day our friends were watched by the police and when in the early evening they gathered round to start their meeting the policeman objected. However, Sr. Cardona persuaded them to listen and then denounce anything they found illegal afterwards. One policeman returned post haste to the town to get reinforcements while the other limited himself to preventing outsiders drawing near to listen. The policeman reached the town when the civil guard, some 20 or 30 strong, were parading in the Corpus Christi procession. To the surprise of the onlookers the whole corps were called away to deal with the Protestants!

They arrived in time for the Benediction and agreed to wait until the end of the final prayer which was made a little longer for their edification. Meanwhile the captain in the radio car got in touch with higher authorities and was told that the meeting could not be forbidden as the Protestants were within their rights. The Governor had realized he was dealing with people who knew the law. So the matter ended with apologies and handshakes all round.

With the greater freedom granted, our small force of evangelists and helpers was stretched to its limits. We would have liked to extend our work to new areas (although we did have nearly 1000 square miles as our "parish") but it was virtually impossible and we could see that the Lord was using us in the country districts to bring blessing to the cities through the people that constantly migrated there. The apostle Paul planted churches in important cities and they evangelised the country districts around. But this does not seem to have happened to any great extent in Spain.

For instance, the work in Madrid is well over 100 years old and yet while I was in Spain I could only find one Evangelical Church in the surrounding province. Why was that? Could we charge the city churches with a lack of evangelistic zeal? No, for their efforts have naturally been absorbed by the needs of the ever increas-

ing “concrete jungles” built around them. In something like twenty years the city grew from less than a million to more than three million inhabitants and the churches were busy trying to plant new meeting places in the suburbs.

I think we could say that the Gospel has been spread more from the country to the cities than vice versa. The Lord has given us our particular task and our opportunity. We have an area about the size of Wales to try, with a handful of dedicated workers, to evangelize. The work is more important than it appears, because of the migration. We are not building very strong churches in our area but we are helping to build them up in many parts of the country. Our people are to be found in Madrid, Bilbao, Asturias, Barcelona, Tarrasa, Sabadell, Tarragona, Valencia, Murcia, Almeria, Seville as well as in France, Germany, England and Argentina.

One Baptist church near Bilbao was founded by a group of our people who started meetings when there was no Gospel witness in the town. One of them who had received a little training though the Bible courses we held, became the first preacher and natural leader until they were able to have a pastor. Our evangelist, Manuel, whose work in the country districts and up the mountains seemed of less significance, has yet been encouraged by hearing of blessing in other areas as a result of his ministry. One family, whom he had led to Christ, moved to a place near Valencia; they brought twenty people to the city church they attended, most of whom were converted and baptized.

Another result of his work was even more surprising. One man, on a visit to his country area, heard him preach but was asleep most of the time. However an impression was made on his mind and he accepted some tracts at the end of the meeting. He returned to his home in Asturias and through the tract was led to get a New Testament, reading which, he came to a personal trust in Christ. He wanted to get a Bible and, going to a bookshop was very discouraged to find that the cheapest they had (a Roman Catholic version) cost £6. However, he wrote to Manuel who sent him one at once and told him that there was a small assembly of believers in the place where he lived. Apparently this was a struggling cause with not much evangelizing zeal and he had difficulty in locating them. He, however, at once began to witness among his work-mates and take them along to the meetings. As a result, the whole work was eventually revived. Many similar stories could be told and it is encouraging to know that great blessing may come from a small meeting of five or six people in a cottage.

Although our work is often discouraging we do have three distinct advantages over those called to work in the cities. The first concerns finance. Our workers, living in small towns and villages, can make ends meet on considerably less than what is paid to city pastors and the cost of our buildings is also less. The second advantage concerns the accessibility of the people. Those living in huge blocks of flats scarcely know anything about their neighbours. As in similar districts in England, much evangelistic labour – up and down long flights of steps – can produce little fruit. Each family tends to live to itself. This isolation reduces contacts and makes it much more difficult for Christian people to bring their neighbours to the meetings. How different is the situation in our smaller communities where people get to know each other. A convert is soon known, and, although he may have to suffer the contempt of his neighbours, the opportunities for Christian witness are obvious.

The third advantage concerns the building up of believers in the faith. On one

occasion we learned that two Baptist pastors from Madrid would be coming our way on a Tuesday for some meetings farther south next day. We offered them hospitality and asked them if they could come in time to take part in a meeting on the Tuesday evening. We announced the meeting on the Sunday and, in the event, four pastors turned up and we had a most interesting meeting. They were astonished to see our chapel nearly full. They said that in Madrid it was practically impossible to get a good congregation on a week night. The advantages this gives us are obvious, though, of course, there is another side to it and we are sorry to see some of our most talented young people move away for lack of work.

# “Lord, I am lonely”

# 8

When Doris and I arrived in England in December 1968, after that hectic conference on registration described in the last chapter, we little imagined that she would not see Spain again and that my future visits would never be longer than two months. In the winter of 1969 I continued my deputation programme hoping for a return to Spain in the late spring. But, instead of that happening, Doris was taken to hospital at the end of March, cancer was found and she had an operation. She came home for a few weeks and then had to return to hospital for two more operations. Gradually she began to regain strength until I was able to leave her for a few days of deputation meetings.

Meanwhile, Frank and Margaret Buffard visited Spain in his summer vacation from teaching. The following winter new problems presented themselves. In November Don Salvador Gonzalez, aged 77, resigned his pastorate of the church in the mining town of Puertollano. This created a vacuum not easy to fill, for he was no ordinary man. He was a born fighter. He had been imprisoned twice by the authorities but remained firm and undaunted. On various occasions he had carried on disputations with the local priest, with a Seventh Day Adventist and with Jehovah's Witnesses. He preached like a machine gun and his forthright proclamation of the gospel gathered a Sunday evening congregation of some eighty people.

It so happened that at that time there was one of our evangelists who was suffering greatly as a “prophet in his own town” and he was looking for another sphere of labour. He paid a visit to Puertollano, but his style of preaching was such a contrast to that of Don Salvador that the people let it be known that they did not want him as pastor. This was a disappointment. In these circumstances I wrote to Don Joaquin, our most capable man, then living in Valdepeñas, asking him if he could undertake to fill the pulpit most Sundays in Puertollano.

This was the situation as Doris gradually regained strength. She had already carried on quietly by herself while I was away three weeks on deputation work in Northern Ireland. She could see that I was needed in Spain to deal with the problems and said she was quite sure that the Lord would look after her if I went. So early in May 1970 I set off alone, praying earnestly for the Lord's guidance and help. He had provided a young woman to prepare my main meals so there was no difficulty on that score.

On my arrival I learned that Don Joaquin had had a very cool reception when he first went to Puertollano, but that as time went on he had received more and more encouragement, and to my surprise, he said that, for his part, he was willing to settle there if all concerned were in agreement and the house could be enlarged to take his family. This lifted a great burden from my mind and I felt that actually his ministry was likely to be more solid and edifying than that of his eloquent predecessor. For during most of his ministry Don Salvador had carried on a day school as well as the church, his life had seemed to be a continual rush and I believe he could prepare a sermon in less than half an hour. Naturally this did not make for depth. I therefore felt that Joaquin's offer was an answer to prayer. I visited Puertollano and found that the elders and the great majority of the members were all in agreement that Don Joaquin should be their pastor. In due course this was ratified by the

Council of the International Mission to Miners who were most responsible financially, and before I left Spain I was able to act as interpreter for the President, Dr. Shewell-Cooper, in the Induction Service.

The settlement of Don Joaquin in Puertollano meant that Don Jose Gonzalez, just a year out of college and showing great promise, would remain in charge of the church at Valdepeñas and it soon became evident that this also was the Lord's will. The two workers and the two churches were in full agreement and I realized that the "tangled skein" which looked so complicated in England had been unravelled and straightened out by a Divine hand. How often this has happened!

Don Joaquin's Induction at Puertollano was not the only special service we held while I was in Spain. Strange as it may seem, our senior workers had never been formally inducted or "set apart" for their ministry. The main reason for this was that, with the shortage of funds, we had used part-time workers as much as possible. The transition from part-time to full-time had been gradual and we wanted to avoid invidious distinctions. Now the situation had changed. We had three young men who had been trained in Bible College (non-existent in the years of the greatest oppression); they had proved their worth and could be registered with the government – giving them advantages like easier access into the hospitals. It was therefore agreed that they should be officially ordained and before I left the country we had two very moving services for this purpose. I could now return to England with a lighter heart.

At my last meeting, the Thursday prayer meeting, the young people sang for me a Valedictory message which I had never heard before. A rough-translation of the first two lines is, "Go in peace your way pursuing, May the Lord your path be showing". I picked up the tune before I left and it haunted me all the long journey through Spain and France, the young voices echoing in my heart and mind, "Go in peace your way pursuing", and I thanked God for those bright young people of Valdepeñas – singing and working for the Lord and preparing to take up the burden of testimony for future years!

On my return from Spain Doris seemed to be managing pretty well, but she had frequent bouts of sickness and was not gaining much strength. The doctor said that she was suffering from adhesions which prevented healing after the operations. It did not seem likely that she would be able to resume her work in Spain. At the same time, I could see that to sustain the work of the Mission there was need for some one to be more or less permanently based in this country. Our home treasurer was being over-worked and needed my help, and deputaiton work was a "must". We were both pensioners and the guidance seemed clear that we should settle down in the home the Lord had provided for us and possibly visit the field for two months or so as I had just done. The Spaniards were well able to carry on most of the year without us.

At the end of August, Mrs. Buffard, wife of the Founder of our Mission, was "called home". I drove to the funeral at Haywards Heath along with Doris and Miss Vessey, one of the few of the surviving lady missionaries who had worked in Spain before the Civil War. Doris stood the long journey fairly well and I was able to leave her while I preached away for two week-ends. But near the end of September

*Footnote* Some weeks after arriving I discovered that the tune is in the Methodist hymn book and is called "Sleepers awake", the words are quite different.

she suffered a sudden relapse. I was in Wales at the time and hurried back to look after her. Two weeks at home, then two weeks in hospital and the end came in the early morning of Tuesday, October 27th. I had received ample warning and I was prepared for it, but there was a bitterness in that experience that I shall never forget. The day after the Lord had taken her I was going for a walk with my two sons near Studland when suddenly, at one particular place on the cliff, the thought cut me like a knife: "I am a widower, I shall have to live alone!"

I do not think anyone could understand that feeling unless he had had a similar experience. One night as I entered the empty house the thought came to me: "Now I have no one to please but myself!" When you have for many years got used to sharing your experiences, it comes as a shock when there is no one to share with! Later I read the book by Catherine Marshall called "To Live Again" in which she gives a graphic description of her feelings and experiences as a widow. Much of what she wrote I had experienced too. I could scarcely see two ducks walking along together in the park without thinking sadly: "All creatures go in pairs, but I walk alone!" Every morning I used to go out looking for some one to whom I could say "Good morning", and if anyone replied "Good morning Mr. Brown", that made my day! There was a Christian girl working in a shop nearby and if she spotted me pass by she never failed to wave. That little act of recognition was an extraordinary comfort – how sensitive can a lonely man be! I kept a "stiff upper lip" and people did not know how I felt.

I laid it all before the Lord in prayer and He rebuked me for not "counting my blessings" which were indeed very numerous. I had good health and could travel in the car. I was welcomed in many homes. My two sisters-in-law, whose homes were not far off, gave me a midday meal, one every Sunday when I was not away, and the other in the week. Moreover I had two sons, two brothers and two sisters whose homes were open to me, although none lived near. I especially enjoyed my Christmases with my son Paul and his happy family, but their home was too far away for more frequent visits. I had to travel on deputaiton work which was very interesting and I could look forward to my next visit to Spain. I had a piano and could play it which often brought emotional release. I had the administration of the Mission to keep me occupied and for a number of months I even had help in the cleaning of the house. At home, my very loneliness was an opportunity to cultivate the friendship with my Saviour – truly I had many blessings.

Time passed and the news from Spain was of increasing liberties. In the same month as I was bereaved they had the largest meeting in our area for thirty years. It was held in the little town of Santa Cruz de Mudela where the chapel would scarcely hold fifty people. the origin of the rally goes back to the custom of holding a "Comradeship Meeting" once a year for the "Christian Endeavour Societies" of Valdepeñas, Santa Cruz and Puertellano. The rallies increased in size and scope through the years, although the C.E. societies had disappeared, and on this occasion they hired a hall, previously impossible. The whole event was well planned, two thousand invitations were distributed, the local authorities were informed and the Mayor sent a representative. They had a good speaker from Madrid and the assembly numbered between four and five hundred including a lot of unconverted people. This was wonderful, especially for a small church!

Another example of the zeal and initiative of our evangelists to make the most of

their new liberties was reported a little later by our man in Valdepeñas, Jose Gonzalez. He wrote "We have had the visit of seven young people from Argentina connected with 'Youth for Christ'. On hearing of their coming I went to see the Director of the local Institute to ask if he would allow the group to sing and preach to the students, (that would be almost unheard of in our own free country!). At first he was very reluctant, but after some conversation he acceded to my request. So at ten o'clock one night we had the great privilege of bringing the gospel to three hundred students between the ages of twelve and sixteen. One result was that afterwards forty of them attended a special meeting in our church where they heard a fine biblical message from the leader of the group. The Director himself was present and afterwards asked to be informed of any special meetings we might have in the future."

However, not all the local authorities were co-operative. Some did not realize how far the law had changed in our favour. They were used to making their own interpretations and dealing with people who did not know their own rights. In one small town our friends were told that the literature they were distributing was prohibited, but they carried on boldly and converged on the central square in full view of the town hall, the civil guard post and the Roman Catholic church. Their boldness won the day.

Don Joaquin wrote from Puertollano of the difficulties he had over a funeral. He told the funeral director that the coffin should be taken to the evangelical church for the service. The director said he had never heard of such a thing and he would only do it if he had written instructions from the police. Don Joaquin continued: "I had great difficulty in making contact with the police chief and in the end I was told that I should apply to the Governor of the province. However, I refused to do this and informed the police that under the new law of religious liberty they had no right to deny us. After hours of argument they at last gave way. The church was packed and the people listened with solemn reverence to the preaching of the gospel."

Of course, not all our difficulties came from outside our ranks. Satan attacked from within as he did in the New Testament times. In the third Epistle of John we read of "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence" (v.9). We had to deal with a man who had the same failing though he started well enough. He lived in Villanueva del Arzobispo next door to the evangelical chapel. He was never suspected of being disloyal to the Franco regime so he had a good standing in the local community. During the years of oppression he started meetings in his own house, even with singing. He had little preaching gift but he could read the Scripture and make a few comments. His wife could lead the singing and they could have a time of prayer. I visited the group several times and enjoyed it; at times there were more than 20 persons present.

Later on the oppression relaxed and the meetings were transferred to the chapel. Later still it was possible for the Mission to place a young evangelist there and this was only done with the full agreement of the group and its leader. The young man did most of the preaching and visitation under the direction of Diotrephes. He left and a second young man came, fresh from college. He was a hard worker and showed great ability and dedication. When he had been there three years and proved his worth, the time came when the authorities offered greater liberties on condition that the churches registered with the government, which involved



appointing an official pastor. Because the younger man did the work of a pastor while the older man only conducted the services, the church appointed the younger as their pastor.

But Diotrephes was very upset. He not only refused to accept the situation, but most Sundays he would not even go next door to the chapel where the services were held, his bad example being usually followed by his wife, daughter and sister. The young man, Juan Bautista, forgave them and carried on patiently as best he could. In my next visit to Spain I visited Diotrephes to try to persuade him to accept the situation, but he remained obstinate. This was a great test for Juan Bautista and his young wife, but they never showed any bitterness of spirit. The end came after a year of tension and difficulty. The young couple went to visit Diotrephes once more to plead for peace and reconciliation and, with the help of the older man's wife and daughter, the breach was finally healed. Patience, humility and much prayer had prevailed when all else had failed.

Now that the unity of the church had, in the main, been achieved, they could with more confidence try to win others for the Saviour. A few months later Juan Bautista was able to report: "We had the visit of a missionary bringing some gospel films. We hired a cinema, distributed 1,400 invitations and showed the film to some 700 people, all of whom heard the gospel preached in the film and also received a gospel of John as they left".

In 1973 we celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of the Mission and I had special meetings in commemoration of the Lord's faithfulness – two in London (West Norwood and Uxbridge Road Tabernacle), others in Parkstone, Southbourne and Clevedon. I also had a series of meetings in Wales, East Anglia, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Swindon. I had few Sundays at home.

Meanwhile the blessings in Spain continued. They always have well attended services at Easter. That year they had a week of exceptional blessing in Puertollano. Don Joaquin wrote:

"On Palm Sunday, without any appeal being made, a young woman rose to her feet to give a spontaneous confession of having received Christ as her Saviour. It was a moment of great joy. On Maunday Thursday we held a baptismal service when six young people, three of either sex, confessed their faith in the Lord's appointed way.

On Good Friday we had a service we will not forget for a long time. Four people made confession of conversion. The first was the brother of a young man converted a few weeks ago, whose life has completely changed – rarely have I seen such a radical transformation. The second was a young married woman who is niece of one of our members and started attending our meetings last autumn. Then there were two girl students who are in the same college as my son. He had spoken to them of the gospel and invited them to come. They attended on Maunday Thursday and when I spoke to them at the end they confessed that they had been tremendously impressed by all that they had seen and heard at the baptismal service; they promised to come again next day. When I spoke to them after the Good Friday service they began to cry and said that they greatly desired to yield themselves to Christ. On the Easter Sunday they came with joy on their faces, but they explained that they might find it difficult to come again as their families were very catholic. At the evening service on Easter Day we heard a young man give testimony of conver-

sion. So in one week the Lord had permitted us to see six baptisms and six confessions of faith!"

A few weeks later I received more news of the two girl students. They had attended a service on the Sunday after Easter and afterwards had a long conversation with Don Joaquin and his wife in which some of their doubts produced by their Roman Catholic upbringing were cleared up. They both had encountered tremendous opposition from their parents. The father of one was quite violent and he had decided to send her to a college in Madrid run by nuns. They obviously belonged to well-to-do families in which the prejudice against any non-catholic religious belief is traditionally very strong.

In the early summer of 1973 I spent seven weeks in Spain and travelled widely to visit the various churches and groups of believers. I had meals in many different homes and I became increasingly conscious of my lonely role. This feeling became intensified after I had returned to England and, on occasion, made sleeping difficult. I took the matter to the Lord in prayer and I remember saying, "Lord, I am lonely, is there not one of your daughters who could join me?" That prayer was to have a wonderful answer within a few months.

Early in 1974 I received an unusual letter from the secretary of the Baptist church in Cranleigh, Surrey. It said: "One of our members, a former native of Gibraltar and a recent convert from Roman Catholicism, asked me to invite you to preach one Sunday at our church." I replied that I happened to be free on the 3rd February and would be pleased to come. The secretary wrote back giving details of the home where I was to sleep the two nights and added: "Mrs Newbury, the lady I mentioned in my earlier letter, will entertain you for lunch and tea".

This Mrs. Rose Newbury turned out to be a remarkable person with an unusual life story. The people where I spent the first night told me: "She has been converted two years and has grown spiritually more than many do in twenty years". Her parents were Spanish and she was brought up in Gibraltar a strict Roman Catholic. She had married an Englishman, Peter Newbury, who was working in the British Consulate and suffering from muscular atrophy. He had just lost his wife, a friend of Rose's, and she married him partly out of pity and partly as a "good work" which would, she hoped, finally contribute towards her salvation. She knew he would gradually get worse.

They lived for some years in Morocco and she gave birth to a baby boy. There, in the small British colony, she met some missionaries belonging to the North Africa Mission, and when her little boy had a birthday she invited the missionaries' children to tea. She thought they were nice people but she did not want to know anything about their beliefs. After some years the British consulate was closed and at the same time it became obvious that for her husband further employment was impossible. Then they were offered a place in a "Cheshire Home" for the disabled in Godalming, Surrey. She was very loth to leave the sunny Mediterranean for the cooler clime of a foreign country with a language she had never mastered. But her duty was clear and she faced it.

They arrived at Gatwick airport in December 1962 – one of the coldest winters of the century! While they were still in mid-flight the airport had been informed of the coming of a disabled passenger and she was impressed by the care and consideration that was shown to them on arrival. Their little son was then seven years old.

She had never seen snow in her life before and now it was lying around for weeks and weeks and WASN'T IT COLD! She was a good worker and as she learned more English and adapted herself to the new environment she found herself looking after other patients as well as her husband and little boy. It was easy for those in charge to take advantage of a willing helper.

Members of the Godalming Baptist Church visited the home regularly and some of them were very kind to her. Her husband attended one of their meetings but she would not let him go again! At one point she was in danger of a breakdown and through the influence of her Baptist friends it was made possible for the family to move to a council flat in Cranleigh, some six miles away. She was now free from other work and was able to give more time to her husband who was gradually getting weaker. She noticed that he had lost faith in the priests and indeed, none of those who had visited him had ever brought him spiritual comfort. Meanwhile he had bought a Jerusalem Bible and evidently found much interest and help from its pages. One day he told her that he was looking forward to leaving his "rotten body" and going to be with the Lord! This seemed very strange to her but she asked no explanation. When he finally "passed away" she was astonished to see that his face was radiant! She realized that he had obtained a peace she knew nothing about.

As time went on she suffered increasingly from loneliness. She found work and went to a dancing class but her life seemed strangely empty, and she realized that, with all her strict obedience to the requirements of "Holy Mother Church", she was still very far from God. She went to priest after priest begging them to tell her how she could get close to God, but not one had a satisfactory answer. She attended a "spiritual retreat" at a convent conducted by a Jesuit, feeling sure that he, of all men, would know the answer. But when she spoke to him about her feelings he merely advised her to apply to a Catholic marriage bureau and try to get herself a husband! She went to see a Spanish priest at Guildford, imagining that he would understand her better, but all he could say was, "Wait, for the Catholic Church is changing". She asked what she could do if death came at that moment! To that he had no answer! Then it dawned on her that the priests, for all their training and holy vocation, were no nearer to God than she was! In her desperation and perplexity she remembered that the people who had shown her most kindness attended a Baptist Church and there, in her own village, there was a Baptist Church! Could she go there to see what they did? She had been brought up to believe that that would be a sin, but her own church had failed her and one Sunday, after going to Mass in the morning, she made her way tremblingly to the Baptist church in the evening. Nervously she sat in the very last pew, but the elderly lady who sat next to her was very considerate and found the place for her in the hymn book and later in the Bible, which she had never handled. The first hymn impressed her straight away; these people were singing with all their hearts! The preacher wore no robes, not even a clerical collar, and yet he was speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ as if he knew Him personally! She said to herself: "I have come to the right place, these people know God!" On leaving at the door she said: "I am a Roman Catholic but I have come here because I need spiritual help."

Every Sunday she continued going to Mass – which seemed more dreary than ever, but the evening service at the Baptist chapel was something she looked forward to all the week. One day she met a Catholic friend and told her of her new

experiences; the girl was alarmed. "Satan is getting at you," she said, and she insisted that there were priests who could give her all the help that she needed. "I will go to one more," Rose replied, and in due course she made her way to a seminary to see the man who was recommended. The interview was a disaster! He took her to a small room and nearly choked her with his tobacco smoke; she found it difficult to express herself and she realised that he, like the other priests, had nothing to give her.

Friends in Godalming heard with delight of her new interest in the Gospel and the two churches started to pray for her. The crisis came after about two months. As she came out of the evening service her heart was "strangely warmed"; she knew she was not alone any more! "Heaven above was softer blue, earth around was sweeter green, something lived in every hue Christless eyes had never seen". All creation seemed different because she now knew her Creator. She was so excited that she went home the long way which took her past the Roman Catholic church where she had heard Mass that morning. She stopped in front of the building and said: "I haven't got to go there any more, HE is in my heart!" That night she could scarcely sleep for sheer joy and the next day, when she went to her work in a shop, her companions noticed the change. "Have you got a boy friend?" said one. "No," she replied, "but Christ is in my heart!"

Her friends in Godalming and Cranleigh were delighted and from that time she scarcely spent a Sunday alone; for when she was not invited out she invited some one else to her own home, while her son went off to see his girl friend. She wrote to her parents in Gibraltar and tried to explain to them the great blessing that had come to her, but they stopped writing while she continued to remember their birthdays. Some months later she was baptised and it was the Godalming minister, the Rev. Charles Campbell, who came to Cranleigh to perform the rite, as the Cranleigh church still had no pastor.

She knew the Lord had saved her to serve Him and she wondered whether she ought to go in for nursing, for she had had experience of caring for an invalid. She got as far as making enquiries at a hospital, but, on second thoughts, she realized that she still had a lot to learn from the Scriptures and, if she took up nursing, there was a danger that the Bible might take second place. She therefore went back to the hospital and explained that she could not proceed.

She learned of the cassette ministry of the Rev. David Pawson of Guildford and, at the suggestion of a missionary on furlough who at that time was a great help to her, she started with a series on Genesis and another on the Epistle to the Romans. These studies occupied all her spare time for several months, while her missionary friend, Mr. David Jarvis was a great help in explaining matters which she could not understand.

Then she came across a leaflet from Capernwray Hall advertising a two months' Bible Study Course. Giving up her work would be a sacrifice but, after prayer, she felt she ought to apply and the way was opened up for her to go. Kind friends looked after her son and the Council reduced her rent while she was not earning. There in Capernwray she learnt a great deal about the Bible and what it means to be a Christian.

She had a great desire to go to Spain. She could scarcely believe that there were evangelical believers in that fanatical country, but she felt that God would make it

possible for her to go there and wrote in a little book of her devotions, "To Spain I will go with a husband!" These prophetic words were written over two years before they could be fulfilled. She knew nothing about gospel work in that land, until a pastor in London who had heard of her conversion, sent her a copy of our magazine through a mutual friend. On receiving it her heart at once warmed to the work and she wrote to the magazine secretary to have it sent to her regularly. Then, seeing that there was a circular letter between the issues of the magazine, she applied for that also and received my Christmas circular in December 1973. It was that which gave her the idea of asking the church secretary to invite me to come and preach.

Before the date of my arrival she happened to visit an elderly man who attended the same church. He said, "I have something about Spain which will interest you" and handed her a copy of "The Churchman's Magazine" containing an article about the Diamond Jubilee of our Mission and a photograph. Unbeknown to her, she was looking at the face of her future husband! Such was the preparation which the Lord had made for us to meet.

After the morning service she took me to lunch together with two lady friends of hers. While they did the "washing up" after the meal we two had an earnest conversation in Spanish and continued in English when the other two joined us. We were very conscious of the presence of the Lord and we finished up with a time of prayer in which all took part. I was tremendously impressed and that night I laid the problem before the Lord: "Should Rose join the Mission, and if so how?" In a flash I knew the answer! I returned home next day wondering when and how I could see her again. "What a pity", I thought, "that Cranleigh is off my usual routes for preaching engagements!" Then I realized that the following Monday week I did have to go near Cranleigh on my way to visit my brother at Canterbury. I therefore wrote to her saying that I believed that the Lord had a special purpose in arranging that we should meet – I wanted to see her again and could call at her home at two o'clock on the Monday. She replied that she could be free at that time as that day she would only be working in the morning. Sensing that important issues were at stake she asked two of her intimate friends to pray especially for her at two o'clock on Monday.

That journey I shall not quickly forget, I remember the two places where I stopped to pray that the Lord would guide me in what I had to say. We talked for three and a half hours and committed everything to the Lord in prayer before we parted. I went on my way singing for joy – until two punctures brought me down to earth with a bump! It happened in driving rain and I got very wet trying to mend the first puncture, but when the second occurred I was helpless! In the goodness of God it happened near a wayside restaurant and there I was able to take refuge and use the telephone. I could not get through to the A. A. so in the end my brother came some miles from Canterbury to rescue me.

After the week there I called again to see Rose on my return journey and became increasingly convinced that I was in the path of God's will and that "all the lights were turning green!" We were engaged within a few weeks and married on May 18th. The church was packed for the great occasion. Rose's family would have nothing to do with us, but her friends at Cranleigh and Godalming prepared for us a bountiful reception to which all present were invited to remain.

In September I took Rose to Spain. As soon as the people heard her speak they said, "She is one of us", and they all gave her a loving welcome. Later she had an opportunity to give her testimony in several places and her story made a great impression. She soon won her way into the hearts of the people and, as time went on, they found in her a friend who could understand them.

*Rose and Stuart in 1978*



# The end of the Franco era

# 9

The situation in Spain gradually changed as Franco, inch by inch, removed some of the shackles placed upon us through the jealous influence of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. At the same time the Roman Church itself, little by little, began to shed its age-long intolerance through the influence of the Vatican Council and closer contact with the countries that had experienced the blessings of the Reformation. With the passing of the years, younger men who had had no part in the bitterness of Franco's conquest were promoted to the bishopric and so great was the change that in the early nineteen seventies an assembly of bishops and priests voted in favour of a resolution asking pardon of the Spanish people for the Church's partisanship in the Civil War.

But this broadminded and charitable attitude was not shared by all, and there was even a backlash of violence by young fanatics calling themselves "the warriors of Christ the King". Some priests were attacked and the first liberal Primate (Cardinal Carancon) was given police protection. The large Brethren hall in Madrid was vandalized one night by a group identified as belonging to the Spanish Traditional Youth Movement. They smashed windows and daubed on the walls "Away with the heretics" and "Long live the Inquisition". At about the same time we heard of two cases of a bishop dissolving a marriage because the wife had been converted. People say that we are exaggerating when we affirm that the Reformation saved us from the tyranny of priestcraft, but that such abuses could take place in the twentieth century is a confirmation of the much greater cruelties of the sixteenth. As I write, twenty years after the Vatican Council we are still receiving evidence of the hatred sown in people's hearts against any Christian who does not bow the knee to Rome, a hatred much greater than the animosity felt for thieves and robbers.

As Franco drew near to his final illness, his problems increased. At the beginning of his Crusade he had gladly shared his authority with the Roman Church but now, to his chagrin, he found priests and even bishops taking part in the agitation for regional autonomy in Catalonia and the Basque provinces. Some of them had to pay for their deviation from the official line and there was a special prison built for the incarceration of "seditious priests". But he could not put the clock back, terrorism increased and in 1973 came the assassination of the President of the Government, Admiral Carrero Blanco, a blow that later was destined to facilitate the liberating measures of King Juan Carlos.

Everyone could see that on the death of Franco, now 83, almost anything could happen. The succession of Juan Carlos to the throne had already been decided but no one could be quite sure about his policy or his capacity. In 1974 he acted for a few weeks as Franco's deputy during the latter's attack of phlebitis; but, on recovering, the Dictator calmly demoted him. Finally, in October 1975, Franco became very seriously ill and extraordinary measures were taken to prolong his life. He survived surgical operations which might have killed a younger man. Ancient religious superstition combined with the very latest medical skills to prolong his life – beside him was the arm of Saint Teresa, on his bed was the mantle of the Virgin of Pilar, while his body was connected to a battery of medical machines. But at last even hibernation could not save him and on the 20th November 1975, the strong man

who had held Spain together for thirty six years breathed his last.

Franco goes down in history as a giant of a man. To some, he was a monster, to others, the saviour of his country. In 1936, as I explained in chapter three, the country was becoming ungovernable and many thought that a strong hand was the only solution. He was obsessed with the danger of communism and although in Spain the communists were only a tiny minority they were very disciplined and behind them was the might of Soviet Russia. He was a practising Roman Catholic and he persuaded himself that God had called him to restore law and order in accordance with what he regarded as the noblest traditions of his fatherland, including, of course, submission to "Holy Mother Church", a semi-political organization which had again and again used force to defend its interests. He doubtless imagined that, with the Army, the wealthy and the Church, plus the goodwill of Hitler and Mussolini, he could put down all opposition in a matter of weeks. He had not counted on the fierce resistance of the majority of the people, who, after centuries of oppression, had begun to taste the sweets of democracy.

Franco was a ruthless soldier, and when at last a ruined country lay at his feet, he had to undertake the Herculean task of government. His enormous internal difficulties were accentuated by the international situation when, a few months after his victory, the peace of Europe was shattered by the outbreak of the Second World War and submarine warfare dislocated international trade. He obstinately refused Hitler's attempt to drag his ruined country into the vortex and Hitler afterwards said to have declared that he would rather have a tooth out than have another interview with that man! A man who could stand up to Hitler was certainly no weakling. During the dark days of the war Franco soldiered on, rooting out and disposing of his enemies by terror tactics.

At the end of the great war his allies lay beaten and he had to negotiate with the victorious democracies. "Marshall Aid" was sent by the U.S.A. to Europe's famished millions but Spain was excluded. The French frontier with Spain was closed and I believe Churchill declared: "We will leave Franco to stew in his own unsavoury juice". The British Ambassador to Spain, who expected to find a subdued Franco begging for help, had to listen to a harangue on the great dangers of communism! Some of my Spanish friends said afterwards that they could not understand why the victorious democracies, having toppled two strong dictators, could not continue and put down the third. They did not understand how a democracy works.

Franco could only rule by suppressing all propaganda but his own, and our Evangelical Churches came under the ban. As the years passed the food was more abundant and of better quality. The electric light did not go out so often and, as the economy of the country improved, Franco wisely saw to it that the poor of the land received some benefit. The beggars at every church door began to disappear. Spain's isolation from the community of nations gradually gave way to recognition. Franco played his cards wisely and after some time obtained lavish aid from the United States which was glad to welcome any ally against communism. Then the great campaign of tourist propaganda brought visitors by the million, bikinis were seen on the beaches and Spain's economy looked up. A new middle class appeared in the land, the lack of which had had much to do with the instability of the Republic. Franco had started with terror, but he did give his country 36 years



of stable government. He crushed religious liberty in 1936 and officially restored it in 1967. Such was the man who, by himself, has written such a large and important chapter in Spanish history. One thing about his exit was remarkable. When did you last hear of a Head of State in a message to his people ask for forgiveness of any he had wronged? Doubtless Masses will be said for his soul for a long, long time. What a tragedy that millions are still taught that the eternal rest of a sinful soul could depend on other people buying Masses to help him out of Purgatory!

After Franco's death King Juan Carlos had to tread warily, but it soon became clear that he was steering the "ship of state" towards democracy. He knew that this was the desire of the great majority of the people. They could never forget the fearful carnage when the extreme right fought the left. Some years later I heard a B.B.C. commentator say that the King "had never put a foot wrong". In time, he encouraged the reversal of Franco's opposition to regional autonomy, especially for Catalonia and the Basque provinces. Even these measures did not satisfy the terrorists for it is not easy for a man who had become accustomed to live like a wolf to settle down as a lamb; and, if he does, he risks the revenge of the whole "pack" as has been seen in Northern Ireland.

The King was interviewed on British television some five years after he came to power. His English was good and I should think that the majority of viewers must have been very favourably impressed. The programme indicated the importance of the army chiefs in Spanish politics and his efforts to ensure their loyalty to himself. The Queen and her three children were included in the programme and they also spoke good English. To this favourable image I can add something about her attitude to Evangelical Christianity. A few years back while we were in Spain we read in a Madrid newspaper that the Queen had broken the tradition of the centuries by attending a protestant religious service. It was held in a Seventh Day Adventist chapel and included a "foot washing" which, although rather different from our practice, was at least biblical and quite outside the mandate of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy. One reason for her freedom from bigotry is that she was not brought up as a Roman Catholic but in the Greek Orthodox Church.

Another incident reveals even more clearly the attitude of the royal couple to the Evangelical Faith. In 1979 the evangelical magazine "Restauracion" published an interview with Don Manuel Gutierrez Marin, the Mayor of a small island of the Canary group, called El Hierro, who was an evangelical believer and a preacher. He had had the privilege of entertaining the royal couple for four hours. He always had an open Bible on his desk, he spoke of his faith and presented their majesties with a nicely bound Bible. He said they were extremely friendly and the Queen was charming.

It was on the night of February the 23rd 1981 that the King had his greatest test and his greatest triumph. "Restauracion" published an eye witness account of the whole terrifying experience from the pen of an evangelical journalist who saw it all from the press gallery of the Congress Building. He writes: "The proceedings were suddenly interrupted by the invasion of armed men in the uniform of the Civil Guard - first shouts, then shots! which were directed at the ceiling but no one knew where they would aim next ... I do not think I ever felt so frightened, but at the same time I never felt so conscious of the presence of God. As I ducked I managed to snap a quick photo of the invader of our peace, Lieutenant Col. Tejero who, pis-

tol in hand, demanded that no one should move ... a cold shiver ran down my spine. Then the shots ceased and we were ordered to put our hands up while we listened to the demands of the invaders. I began to pray fervently, "Lord, save our country from these armed men. How terrible to reduce to silence the government of a whole nation by force of arms..."

At one o'clock in the morning the calm, firm voice of the King on television set at rest the fears of his sleepless subjects. In stern tones he denounced the conspiracy and demanded the surrender of every disturber of the peace. By his courage and determination he saved his country from the horrors of another blood bath. Few monarchs of modern times have done so much for their nation in so few hours!

The far-reaching events described in the last chapter resulted in a transformation of the situation of Evangelical believers in Spain. The trend towards more toleration and liberty initiated by Franco could not but continue on its own momentum, nor could a few fanatics check it.

Our workers were not slow to make full use of the wider liberties conceded. A few months after Franco's death I noted ten different methods of evangelism that they were employing in addition to the ordinary preaching services: (1) Weddings and funerals – opportunities sometimes missed in Britain – (2) Open air meetings, (3) Meetings in patios and back yards, (4) Holiday Bible schools for children, not confined to places where there was a Sunday School, (5) Summer camps, especially for young people, (6) Gospel films, (7) Colportage work, (8) "Gospel raids" when witnessing teams visited an unevangelised town with open air witness backed by door-to-door work, (9) Free Bible correspondence courses usually sent out from some one in Madrid who would inform the nearest evangelical worker so that he could follow up the contacts made, (10) Religious festivals such as Christmas, Easter and "All Saints Day", November 1st, when it is the custom for people to visit the cemetery and light lamps on the graves of their departed loved ones.

One of our evangelists, whose congregation did not usually exceed thirty, got 200 people under the sound of the gospel on "All Saints Day" by holding a well advertised public meeting in a neutral hall with an address by a speaker from Madrid entitled "Can the dead live again?" In other places open air meetings were held in the cemeteries on that day. In spite of all the initiative and zeal displayed by our evangelists, the results were meagre owing to the deep-seated prejudice created by centuries of priestly rule.

An interesting sequel to the 9th method (free Bible Correspondence Courses) was recorded by our evangelist, Manuel. He wrote, "I was informed that a man or boy in my area had received a gospel of John and had written for the simple course advertised. I immediately set off to the place and found that the applicant was a boy of 15. I saw his mother who told me with some heat that they did not want to know anything about that 'false religion'. She went on to say that years previously she had been working as a maid in the house of a man in Beas who had in his employ a married couple – devout Catholics. But they had been visited by one of 'those terrible Protestant pastors' who had quite turned their heads, so that they also became Protestants. I asked her whether she was referring to a man named Antonio and his wife Gila. 'Yes,' she said with some surprise, 'Do you know them?' 'Yes' I said, 'and I am that terrible pastor who visited them and taught them the gospel and explained to them the love of God'. I continued straightaway telling her of the wonder of Calvary! She listened open-mouthed and finally said, 'Well, if it is all about that, my husband and I will not object to our son studying it, and if he wants to ask you any questions we shall be pleased to see you.' I gave her my card and she bade me a friendly 'Goodbye'. A few days later I passed that way again and had a very friendly reception at their home."

While we thank God for the initiative and ingenuity revealed by these methods,

I am sure that there is nothing more effective than the simple day to day witness of believers who know how to "gossip the gospel". One such woman lives in Valdepeñas and her zeal has often proved very effective, her name is Isabel Merlo. I suppose she knows little about theology as such, but she loves the Lord and she has the main facts of the gospel at her finger tips.

I think it was in the year 1972 that a brother of hers living in the little nearby town of Moral lost his wife and asked her if she would come and help him for a few weeks. She did so and soon began to witness to his relatives. Not long after that I went with Jose Gonzalez for a meeting in the home. She warned us that her brother was rather apt to make jokes of our beliefs. I therefore suggested that we should sing about the cross and I found that the believers present knew a very solemn hymn we often used to sing on Good Friday. We therefore sang it and then I read Isaiah 53 and spoke of the tragic aspect of Calvary and what it can mean for us. The man could make no jokes about that, and I felt that the meeting had not been in vain.

By this time one of Isabel's relatives had been converted and soon afterwards three more, all women, had come to know the Lord. As they were all related this made for solidarity and they were able to help one another. Jose Gonzalez visited them regularly and taught them that a Christian is one who reads the Bible and prays. He gave them some simple Bible studies and at every meeting they all took part in prayer. On our annual visits to Spain it was always a joy to visit them and hear them pray – the evangelist had reminded me "Do not close the meeting until all have prayed".

Then a fifth woman began to attend the meetings and made some kind of a profession of faith. It so happened that soon after this her little girl of about five took ill and died. The priest declared that it was her "apostasy" that had caused the child's death! Her mother turned against her and her neighbours criticised her. They gave her such a bad time that she stopped attending the meetings and, when she gave birth to another baby girl, she was so terrified of losing her that she took her to the priest to be christened. Although she gave in to pressure we have heard that she is far from happy.

It must have been at about the same time that there was a public attack on our work in the brochure of the annual Festival of the Patron Saint of the place, the "Virgin of the Mountain". It said: "There are some who with guilful tricks wish to draw us away from our catholic traditions ... Our fathers taught us that through the holy Virgin we would find the quickest way to God. She is our only source of salvation ... with her mother heart she gives us her blessings and opens to us the gate of heaven ... Let us not allow ourselves to be led away from that which for our fathers and for us has been our only hope ... for us Catholics, the holy Virgin and she alone will be the centre of our existence".

This official hostility has kept other people away from our meetings, but the four women remained faithful and, guided by the evangelist, they began to make their offerings to the Lord's work. I was very impressed when once it was my turn to go, and afterwards when I opened the envelope they had handed to me I found the equivalent of £17! Their husbands are not so opposed to their faith as at the beginning and I understand that one or two of them have attended special meetings in Valdepeñas. Meanwhile the women have faithfully taught their children to pray and

read the Bible, with the result that three of their daughters have been converted and one of them has married a Christian young man and settled in the capital city of the province. All honour to the evangelist, Jose Gonzalez, who taught them that a Christian is one who prays, reads the Bible and gives for the Lord's work. He is now working in the Canary Isles.

"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform" as William Couper says in his well known hymn. He can use a chance remark made by some one who has no thought of obeying Him. I had an interesting experience of this in a chain of events which began in December 1973. One evening in a television programme called "In the south today" I saw a woman who complained that her husband had been imprisoned in Spain. He had been five months awaiting trial and the British Consul was doing practically nothing to help him. Then she added, "he has always been an atheist, but now he is asking for religious books". A friend rang up the same evening and reminded me of that pathetic appeal and asked if I could do anything about it. "What a pity", he said "if that man should be sent literature of the Jehovah's Witnesses"! Through the B.B.C. I got the telephone number of the woman and asked her where her husband was imprisoned and whether she had sent him a Bible. She said he was in Cadiz and she had not sent him any books, his name was Gordon Kay. I therefore wrote to him sending him a Bible and also the book, "Selected to Live", which I felt sure he would find very interesting and helpful. I also wrote to the Spanish pastor in Cadiz, whom I knew, asking him if he could visit the prisoner or arrange for some one else to go if he did not know enough English.

After three weeks I had a reply from the pastor saying that, in spite of his limited English, he had visited Gordon Kay and found that he was genuinely seeking God, so much so that he had requested that evangelistic services should be held in the jail. Then I had a letter from Gordon Kay himself. Sincerity appeared in every line. He confessed that as a youth he had abandoned all belief in God, but, after five months in the prison he had reached "rock bottom" and in his despair he had come across a book, "Beyond Ourselves", by Catherine Marshall and that had given him a glimmer of hope. My letter and the books I had sent brought clearer light and he had received much inspiration from "Selected to Live" – which he had passed on to an English speaking German. He was most grateful for the pastor's visit and hoped that he would be allowed to hold services.

I kept in touch with Mrs. Kay and also wrote to an evangelical vicar in her area. In due course I heard again from the pastor that he had received permission to hold religious services, but restricted to non-catholics which ruled out all the Spaniards, so his congregation had consisted of Britons, Americans, Canadians, Germans and Dutch. Gordon, he said, was a great help and also the German who could speak English and Spanish; these two gave every sign of being converted. He had started the services at 9.30 on Sunday mornings and sixteen had attended. I was impressed by his readiness to undertake a service in a difficult language at a time when he had his own church services to follow.

I sent Gordon a second book, some tracts and assured him of our prayers. He wrote expressing his deep appreciation and also bearing testimony to the tremendous help he was receiving from the pastor, Don David Pena. The letter continued:

"His own sincerity is so totally beyond question that it is impossible not to be impressed by it ... his Sunday services are carried on in difficult conditions. We

have the language problem ... no music for our singing, on occasion not even seats, but somehow the lack of ceremony adds to the sincerity of the occasion. Many of my fellowprisoners have attended to scoff, or to pass an hour of our boring routine, and stayed to become regular members of our congregation.”

In the same letter he mentioned the terrible shock of finding that he had been sentenced to twelve years of imprisonment. He had found expression of his feelings in the words of David in II Sam. 22. 7 “In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God and He did hear my voice out of His temple, and my cry did enter into His ears”. He begged me to write to the Minister of Justice making an appeal for clemency, which I did without delay as did also Don David. I did not get many more letters from Gordon as he was only allowed to write once a week and he naturally gave priority to his wife.

In December 1974 there was a further complication. Don David wrote that he was still continuing the services in the prison but that Gordon Kay had been transferred to a prison in Malaga. I did not know any evangelical pastor in that city but I did have a somewhat out-of-date evangelical directory which listed several Spanish pastors and one American in the city. I decided on the latter and wrote to him, Don Daniel del Vecchio, outlining the story of the prisoner and asking if he could visit him.

In due course I had letters from both the prisoner and the missionary which confirmed that the Lord had guided my choice. The missionary wrote:

“I am happy to be able to tell you that we visited Gordon Kay ... and found him to be a very fine young man, very open to the gospel... We are now attempting to gain permission to hold services in the prison. Food parcels have been given to him, and a group of believers are praying for his release. Interested people have been raising money to have Mrs. Kay brought here to visit her husband as he has not seen her for a year.... I believe the Lord has His hand on this man and will use even this terrible trouble to glorify His Name”.

I should explain that there is a numerous colony of English speaking people in the Malaga area and the missionary had organized a flourishing church among them. I believe that the liberal financial help referred to came from members of this church. Gordon wrote that the missionary had been with him for an hour and they had a wonderful time:

“He looked at my battered sandals on the point of falling apart and said “What size shoes do you wear?” I did not know the continental size, so he said, “Try my shoes”. They were of good quality, black, smart and fitted me perfectly! He insisted on my keeping them and walked out with his impeccable business suit and my old sandals on his feet!”

In due course Gordon’s wife did visit him

“She had reached breaking point, unknown to me,” he said, “and arrived with the intention of asking for a divorce. She left full of hope again bemused by an awakening belief in Christ.... What a tremendous report of God’s help this is! If such uncertain faith can accomplish so much, what mountains can indeed be moved by a faith that is total. You, my dear and yet unknown friend, were God’s instrument in starting this miraculous snowball!”

A few months later I received another letter from the missionary reporting that he had obtained permission to hold services in the Malaga prison. At first it had

been hard going but then the atmosphere changed radically. The letter continued: "Now there is appreciation and interest among some of the men.... Gordon is doing very well and is a real leader among the men.... We regularly send in food and clothing for the men. Our church brought Mrs. Kay over and she made a profession of conversion. However, she had been living with another man and promptly fell back into sin again.... I wrote a strong letter urging total repentance but haven't heard from her, nor has Gordon."

After that I never heard again from Gordon. I believe he wrote but the prison staff did not trouble to send his letter on. I wrote again but got no answer. However, I finally got more news from the missionary. It was dated March 22nd 1977. He said that Gordon was expecting release within two months. He, the missionary, had planned to have him in his home for a time of re-adjustment, but regulations had laid down that he was to be taken to the airport and put on a plane for England. The letter continued:

"After visiting his children and aged mother he is probably going to Germany where a friend had arranged employment for him. His wife is suing for a divorce ... she does not seem to be well mentally and we could do very little for her. I saw Gordon a few days ago and he seemed to be doing well. He did not mention having received your letter."

That is the last news I have. I expected Gordon to get in touch with me when he arrived in England and as he did not do so I can only presume that he had somehow lost my address. As he was planning to settle in Germany I suppose this would be at the invitation of the man who was his fellow-prisoner in Cadiz and converted at the same time. His sentence of 12 years was reduced to four and I have no doubt that the Lord, who so wonderfully saved him in his great distress, has provided a new life for him in the land of his adoption.

In summing up this fascinating series of events, we can trace the hand of a merciful God who heard the lonely cry of the prisoner in his distress, who prompted his wife to speak on television and mention his desire for "religious books", arranged that I should hear her words, inspired two pastors with pity and zeal and brought the gospel of salvation to two groups of desperate men!

My story is nearly finished, but the work of the gospel in Spain goes on with increasing opportunities and in spite of limited resources. The Roman Church still has immense power in Spain and at the same time the people are becoming more secular in their outlook. Materialism freezes faith and children are being taught that they evolved from apes and the whole process started by mere chance. Young intellectuals are being attracted to the mystic religions of the East while some of their parents still cling to their favourite Madonna. To complicate further a confused situation the "Jehovah's Witnesses" and the Mormons are making the most of the freedom of propaganda. In the face of such a daunting situation the workers of the Spanish Gospel Mission, nearly all nationals, are redoubling their efforts to spread the tidings of salvation. Who will go to help them?

## **Appendix**

### **Questions for simple Bible studies as used in Spain**

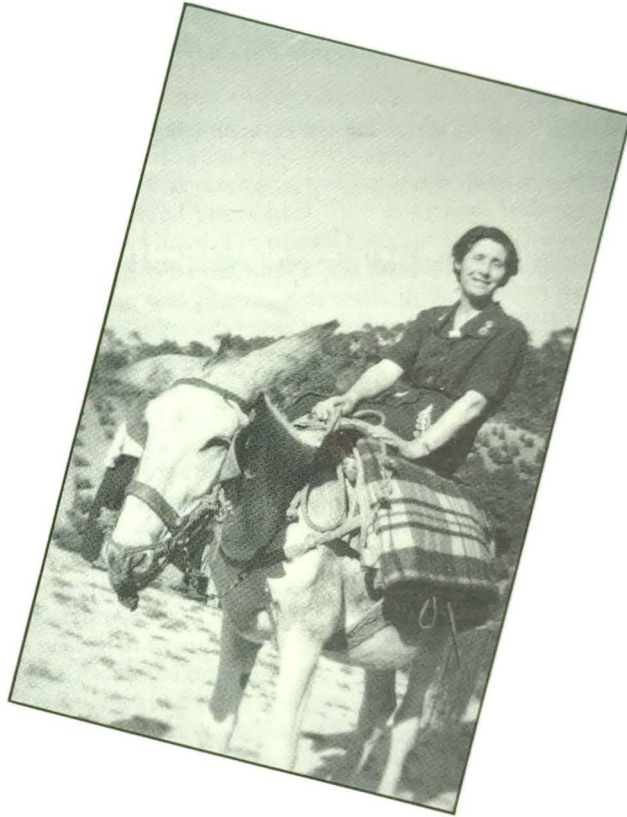
#### **Study by Portions**

- 1 *What title could we give to this portion?*
- 2 *Who are the principal persons mentioned?*
- 3 *What are the most important verses?*
- 4 *What do we learn about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?*
- 5 *What do we learn about ourselves?*
- 6 *What are the principal virtues taught by these verses?*
- 7 *What sins are we warned against?*
- 8 *Is there a prayer which we could offer with faith?*
- 10 *What light do we gain on this passage by the verses which precede it and follow it?*
- 11 *What other verses shed light on the passage?*
- 12 *What is the principal lesson we have learned from this study?*

#### **Study by Biographies**

- 1 *What spiritual advantages did this person have in his upbringing?*
- 2 *What disadvantages?*
- 3 *Who was a spiritual help to him?*
- 4 *Who was a hindrance to him? (or her)*
- 5 *What was his work*
- 6 *Was he called to some special task for God? if so what was it, and how did he do it?*
- 7 *What were his principal virtues?*
- 8 *What were his most outstanding faults?*
- 9 *What was his greatest joy?*
- 10 *What was his greatest sorrow?*
- 11 *Was he a type of Christ? if so how?*
- 10 *Is there a verse which sums up God's verdict on his life?*
- 11 *What lessons can we learn from this study?*





*Doris Brown visits the people in the country*

**Spain, 1946.** Food is rationed, travel a nightmare. Foreigners must report to the police everywhere they go... Spain in 1946 - when the mere mention of the gospel is identified with the enemies of Franco's Regime.

Why go? Because the Lord has said "Who will go for us?" Why go? Because in 1946 Christians in Spain were persecuted, distressed and scattered.

The dramatic story of obedience and service in difficult circumstances.

