

ANDRÉ JOSEPH GIROD

And Yet...

*...when you submit
your life to God.*

*An inspiring true account of missionary
experience 1961-1982 and beyond.*

The God of Heaven will answer you with success.



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*I discovered from my youth
that it was never difficult to make decisions:
each step revealed a path traced in advance
in which I had to walk.
I just had to be available.*

A. J. Girod

And yet...

when God leads a life.

André - Joseph GIROD

This book is a beautiful, dynamic retrospective of a life led by God and dedicated to others. It will be very useful for all those who wish to serve God to win souls, as part of the Mission but also to rescue and feed populations in distress in the extreme situations that the planet is experiencing today.

It offers essential tools, the main one being faith and total abandonment in God who prepares everything in due time. Numerous geographical and historical landmarks enrich the story and allow us to better understand West Africa, Chad in particular. Relevant photos illustrate the story.

The author has had strong experiences within humanitarian organizations and in particular at the heart of the World Food Program (WFP), whose human resource needs are enormous. It enables readers to discover the plight of many countries and to understand how every child of God can be of use there.

This book makes you want to embark with God with our contemporaries for their survival here below and their salvation for eternity....

Nothing is impossible with God. In addition, the reading, proper, is easy. Life stories, multiple experiences, and many anecdotes alternate with the deep reflections and lessons necessary to understand the author's truly extraordinary life.

-- Mrs. Danielle Mempiot

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

Part 1: A transformed family

1. <i>From occultism to Christ</i>	13
2. <i>Pierrette - A destiny</i>	23
3. <i>Will you give me your job?</i>	27
4. <i>Military Service</i>	35

Part 2: The Mission in Chad

1. <i>Departure for Africa</i>	43
2. <i>Repentance and visitation</i>	51
3. <i>Beyond what you think</i>	55
4. <i>1969. A trip across the Atlantic</i>	63
5. <i>Tributes to the pioneers</i>	71
<i>Pierre Madjirom</i>	72
<i>Timothée Fidiga</i>	77
<i>Rombada Barthélémy Shanzé</i>	81
<i>Jean Bemba</i>	86
6. <i>Mailao</i>	101
7. <i>Éré</i>	111
8. <i>A little further: Kim, Djoumane, Kolobo, Ham</i>	119
9. <i>Mission, it's also</i>	125
10. <i>A very tried country - When everything changes</i>	135

Part 3: The great transition

1. <i>1981. What to do now?</i>	141
2. <i>From Ghana to Benin via Laos</i>	149
3. <i>For the children from Sao Tome and the refugees in Bukavu</i>	155
4. <i>Last assignment</i>	165
5. <i>Back to my first vocation</i>	171

Prayer



FOREWORD

Why this book?

Encouraged by close friends, I took it to heart to recount my journey to show that God is not far away in the life of someone seeking.

I did it by telling ordinary stories, lived with my brothers, stories that myself have often experienced.

Above all, I write:

For my family and our spiritual children,

For the generation of Christians in Chad, who want to know the origin of their church, and love to read what their pioneer brothers sowed in countries and be inspired to reciprocate in their turn,

For all the friends and acquaintances who have contributed from near or far to this Mission which is today a well-established church in Chad and followed by “Church of God Germany” (without a permanent missionary however).

I like to repeat that I have realized the presence of the Lord since the day I entrusted him with all my life. Nothing spectacular, but facts. I wish you to discover this companion of life.

What happened next is in the book. I followed God who showed me the way; I was available and obedient without constraint. I admit it was a great life!

These stories are a bit old now, however, they can encourage the youth:

Why not you?

Do not despise your youth; you have great values that must be expressed.

Give the commands to Jesus because he himself said: “Without me, you can do nothing”

*“What you have, give it to others,
It’s very simple, like the Gospel.”*

Le Dauphiné Libéré – January, 1989

“André Girod: The energy of hope
Our current event at the Capital, around the “Current Croissants”, invites a “Missionary Pastor” by vocation, who has shared his Faith with us. André Girod, 50, still fights with the energy of Hope. Currently, he is already in Sao-Tome to live a new adventure after a family stay in Bourgoin-Jallieu. Nothing, in particular, distinguishes him from an “average Frenchman”, except this intimate conviction of being a servant of Christ, a conviction expressed by the accuracy of the subject, the frank, almost inquisitive gaze of his light-blue eyes and the confident gesture of his hands perpetually reaching out to “the other”.

André Girod tells. It is reminiscent of a Provençal storyteller whose words, calmly aligned, make a little music that speaks especially to our senses and our heart. Useless to convince, the message passes, settles in our memories and these are the images which parade in our imagination as if we had lived by his side, the most exhilarating hours of his mission.

His Protestant Christian training from his early youth prompted him to do something other than build trucks for “Renault-Berliet”, where he was hired.

Some missionaries visited his parents. His older sister, Pierrette, was drawn to this priesthood, the example was given. He would in turn follow the word of Christ and would become for hundreds of Africans “Mr. André” as one become “Father of Foucault” or “Mr. Vincent”.

He will never lose contact with Bourgoin-Jallieu and its region where, knowing his vocation, friends and humanitarian aid groups will help him carry out his projects. He will owe his first well to Rotary, then the Lions Club will give him new grants.

André Girod by discovering animism, almost hereditary to Africans, will take as his motto the art and the manner of giving them a taste for entrepreneurship, to invest, to feel concerned; we must do more than give. Sharing must have a return. What would spirituality look like if there was not some sort of hierarchical planning of tolerance, solidarity and forgiveness?

With André Girod, the vocation is above all to tackle problems.”

*Marc Perry, journalist
« Current croissants »*

Part



A
TRANSFORMED
FAMILY

Chapter 1

From occultism to Christ



The ways of God are mysterious.

Or, how a young couple, full of hope for life, fall into depression and failure, but ...

... A new path presents itself to them.

This is the story of our parents: how they found the right path, thanks to faith in God.

From ignorance to the light

Our parents, Louis and Juliette Girod got married in 1933 and settled in the town of Jallieu, which would later become Bourgoin-Jallieu.

Like any young couple, they dreamt of being successful in life and in business. They opened a shoemaking workshop in the main street of the city, adjoining their apartment. They invested all their savings in this project. Dad, not only prepared his workshop to make leather shoes, sewn by hand, but also to make shoes for deformed feet; it was a rare specialty, which did not have customers at the time because people had very little money.

Unfortunately, in a short time, the dream became disillusionment: business income was meager and comfort very precarious. Disappointment made its appearance, especially at Mom. She ended up looking for a job at the post office and was assigned to

distribute telegrams to individuals.

Obstacles rose like mountains before them. I don't know if they considered a divorce, but the mood in the house was at an all-time low.

It was a time when religion was more of a routine than a spiritual commitment and when many people tolerated the consultation of a medium, in various forms. Everyone was looking for an answer to the main decisions in life.

**The mysteries of our lives are not ignored by God.
They are sometimes like mirrors to force us to
pray to the unknown God!**

My parents were thirsty for knowledge and wondered: "Where are we going? What do we have to do? Is there a God and why is he so far from us?"

In this time of deep depression, something unexpected happened to them! A marquee called the "Evangelical Tent" had been erected in the public square near Dad's shop. The sign read:

*Evangelical Tent
Come and listen
to the Good News
of Jesus-Christ
everyday
at 7 pm.*

It was Mom who had been really drawn to the announcement. However, in the family, nothing important was done without “consulting” a medium. It turns out that Aunt Marie was at home precisely at that time and took the initiative for the “consultation”. Being a medium herself in her spare time, she practiced what is called “automatic writing”. No one knew whether this habit was good or bad because even the priest of the Catholic Church did not openly oppose it. People had so many problems that they easily turned to all kinds of means to get their questions answered.

By mutual agreement, the parents asked Aunt Marie to ask the question: “Can we go under this marquee or not?”

My friends, do not be shocked at the mysterious means by which God comes to save those who sincerely seek Him.

*The response was immediate, written in fiery letters on the wall: **“Go ahead, they are brothers and you will sing praises to God there”.***

Aunt Marie then remarked that the answer had not come as usual, under her pen, but that, for the first time, the message was written directly on the wall. It was another sign that God was protecting this ignorant family.

So, it was without hesitation and full confidence that the same evening, the whole family, including Aunt Marie, went to this makeshift church.

It was an event in itself. The consequences of this visit exceeded all expectations.

Praise the Lord who works wonders for “the sons of men”.

From then on, consultations with mediums and other practices never took place anymore in our family. The living and true God sent a man to teach us His ways.

A Swiss peddler

A few days later, an evangelical peddler who was going from house to house presenting the Bible, without much success however, came to visit Papa. He came to the workshop regularly because Papa seemed interested. That day, he again showed him the importance of reading the Bible every day: “It contains all the wisdom necessary for life.”

But for fear of the friends of the “bistro”² and the customers, Papa refused, as always, to buy a Bible. Talking about God or believing in him was not at all fashionable.

Mom, having learned of her new refusal to acquire the Book, openly reproached him for it: “Why didn’t you buy the Bible?” Miraculously, this peddler returned the next day... but without a Bible! He just wanted to say hello to my father. He must have been very surprised, because that day, it was Papa who asked for the Book!

And without delay, the big book began to form part of the daily life of this distressed couple.

When the Spirit of God begins a work in a heart, he continues it relentlessly to bring the person to salvation. So it was with our parents, throughout their lives. We the children have been influenced by the teachings of the Book.

1. Controlled by the spirit, The Medium’s hand writes the answer, as if it were dictated.

2. Bistro: pub.

But, how do we understand it? How can we use it?

Like an angel of God, the peddler showed great patience and tact in explaining the Word and answering parents' questions. He was a Swiss missionary who had come to stay in the city with his family. Regularly, therefore, these two families have come together to study the ABCs of the Gospel.

When the time came, the missionary stressed the need for conversion, that is, for each one to make the individual decision to accept Jesus Christ, in his life, and for all his life! To say yes to God is already to believe. But this new language was incomprehensible. Parents were followers of the religion, but did not practice it.

Big questions arose in their hearts at that time: Do we have to change our religion? Giving yourself to God like that, just by one prayer, is that the truth?

In this hesitant journey, the immense grace of God accomplished everything.

The same day at two different locations.

One Thursday, market day, Mom had set off to buy the week's provisions, but she was certainly not alone that day: on the way, the words of the peddler kept coming back to her in memory. "Give yourselves to Jesus to be saved."

After she had stocked up, she started back home, and it was then that she said this prayer: "Yes, Lord Jesus, I receive you; I accept you in my life; save me."

She was filled with new joy as she walked into Papa's store, basket in hand and radiant face, and announced to our father: "Papa, I accepted Jesus in my life, on the way!"

Such a statement was like a bomb in itself! But a serene joy already inhabited her.

Surprise for surprise! Without the slightest hesitation, Papa who was sitting behind his counter replied openly: "Maman, I too made this decision while you were at the market!"

Wonder for wonder. They had both received Jesus into their lives on the same day, at the same time, in two different places. Isn't this the mystery of the glory of God who loves to bring lasting upheavals in the life of a disoriented couple? On that day, a miraculous life began for them.

"Oh, my God, how beautiful your works are." Psalm 92.5

Father later won several members of his family to Christ, including his mother, Aunt Mary, and Aunt Bertha.

Our parents lived together for seventy years. Bible reading and prayers never ceased. They prayed for the needs of the house and also for those of the congregation: Dad was often called the evangelist; he led an assembly of twenty Christians for 25 years. Mom has always led a discreet and exemplary life of faith, prayer, and endured trials with perseverance to obtain positive answers.

Mom's prayer

We lived as a family in Papa's backroom in the city center, where we spent all of our youth. Now, in the secret of her prayers, Mom had asked God for a "piece of land". She would tell us from time to time, but how do you get it? We did not know it!

About ten years later, a farmer came to the store and point blank, Dad asked him:

- Mr. Charreton, don't you have a piece of land to sell on the hill?
- Yes, yes, I have something for you, but you must come and see it!

At that time, Pierrette and I were preparing our departure for Africa and together we prayed: "Heavenly Father, we are ready to go to Africa to serve you; give our parents a home like our mother dreamed of and give them a long retirement."

In just a few weeks, the land became their property!

How were they able to set up this lifelong project? I don't know, and I must say that we were really surprised, three months later, when Mom wrote to us: "The Savoyard chalet is under construction!"

A Savoyard chalet!!! Mom was from Savoy, a mountainous region! Did she add this detail to her prayers?

We were very happy with the news: a chalet built in the middle of a large plot, where Papa had prepared a beautiful garden and planted some fruit trees.

The authorization requests, the establishment of financial credit, everything was already a thing of the past. We were impatient to see this wonder, but we would have to wait: we were still in Chad for three years.

In the meantime, friends came to visit our parents just to admire this cozy little nest.

Mom loved her house so much!

They lived on the Hill for over forty years, and the Lord has yet blessed them with long years of retirement.

How many times have we heard of the conversion and the testimonies of faith from our parents? In our eyes, it was a giant leap. I am always amazed: God does not despise small beginnings. He holds our destinies in his hands.

Their faith and devotion to the Lord have permeated our youth. The four children of us experienced the faith that gives life a new dimension and we still bear witness to it today.

Our parents lived healthy lives until the last day. Dad passed away at the age of 93. Mom followed her husband six months later, she was 92 years old. They went to the Father's House, peaceful and full of days.

To God alone be the honor and the glory.

We keep this precious advice in our hearts:

*“Honor your father and your mother;
this is the first commandment with a promise
and you will live a long time on earth.”
(Ephesians 6:2)*



*From left to right:
Papa Girod, H el ene, Andr e, Anne-Marie and Maman.
Pierrette was still in Africa.*

Chapter 2

Pierrette - A destiny



Pierrette, the eldest daughter of the family, was born in 1935. As the birth of the second child approached, when Mum announced: "I am going to the maternity ward to look for a little sister", Pierrette replied categorically: "No, I want a little brother AND a little sister." At that time, ultrasound instruments did not yet exist, so we had to wait until the time of delivery to find out more! The blessed day has arrived; it was July 24, 1938. The doctor welcomed the first baby. It was a girl... but suddenly he exclaimed, "Wait, there's a second!" And that was the little brother. Thus the prayer of a three-year-old child had been heard in heaven.

The political situation in France and in Europe was not at all good. Rumors of war circulated everywhere. Uncertainty and bad news were confirmed in September 1939, with the outbreak of World War II. Everyone was demoralized: what was going to happen?

In the Book, it is written: "The trial of faith is more precious than gold purified by fire." 1 Peter 1.7

The family grew up in the midst of various trials but always protected, under divine gaze. We were three young children, and then another little sister was added just before these sad events ended in November 1943. It was a ray of sunshine for all of us. Her name was H el ene, but we called her L el e or Rachel, because she liked that name!

The family survived the uncertainty until May 8, 1945, when the war ended when the Allies accepted Germany's surrender.

Our youth have experienced hardship, like all the children of our generation. There was no more war, but food was scarce, poverty was everywhere.

A surprise package

Mom loved to tell this memory of an extraordinary response to our needs:

There was nothing left to eat in the cupboard and it was very difficult to get supplies; it was even necessary to get tickets to obtain certain products, such as sugar, meat, flour and other commodities.

That day, a horse-drawn trailer pulled up right in front of Papa's shop to deliver a large package addressed to Pastor Louis Girod. This 17 kilo treasure came from Canada! Yet we did not know anyone in this distant land.

We were all curious about what was in it. The children were squatting around the parcel, while Mom unwrapped each item: flour, sugar and... chocolate! Cries of surprise accompanied this latest discovery. Chocolate, we didn't really know what it was at the time, but this name alone gave us great pleasure! This is how, every day, we were able to have a hearty breakfast thanks to Christians in Canada whom we did not know!

On his bicycle, Papa often went in search of meat and eggs because these products were not readily available in stores. One day when he was visiting a farmer, it turned out that this man needed a real pair of leather shoes. He ordered by offering to pay with food from his farm. So, our father also had a source

of supply. It was like that after the war, and we saw God's help there.

*Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
they find abundant sources.*

(Psalm 84:5)

The end of the war

Thank God, France experienced the Liberation with the help of the allied armies of friendly countries. We were young children from 7 to 11 years old, but we remember precisely this event of the liberation of our city in August 1945. Convoys of American soldiers passed in the street, in front of our house. The soldiers threw chewing gum, cookies and candy at us. What a joy for all the children deprived of sweets! We loved Americans, we kids. It was a time of great joy and brotherhood given the circumstances.

Destiny confirmed

At the age of twelve, Pierrette said willingly: "I want to be a nurse". And indeed, she became a nurse at the age of 20, graduating from the Rockefeller School in Lyon. She still did not know that while awaiting her birth, the parents had dedicated their first child to the Lord. Their prayer, made in 1935, was simple: "May this child be a doctor and a missionary". This request was carried out from 1961 to 1971 in Africa.

After dedicating her life to God, Pierrette followed practical teachings and Bible lessons in a "missionary school". In truth, her training had already started well, in her youth and in her family life.

Her temperament made Pierrette an accomplished servant for the Lord. She was very popular wherever she was and, since she played the piano, it was not uncommon for beautiful hymns to be heard wherever she was.



Chapter 3

Will you give me your job?



I wasn't born a Christian. Papa was a lay pastor of a group of twenty-five people for twenty-five years. But one does not become a Christian by birth or by inheritance; it is up to everyone to choose their destiny, with full knowledge of the facts.

First contact

One evening, I heard the parents talk about the return of Jesus who would come to pick up his children. This will be "the rapture of the faithful" announced in the New Testament of the Bible. It was something new to me; I was eleven years old. I was hearing "One will be taken and the other will be left" and also that this world event could happen "in the blink of an eye, at any time." What my parents were reading was from Bible texts, so it could be true.

This thought has worked my conscience. I was not a rebel, but I had not taken a stand towards God; however, that night I said a prayer: "Lord Jesus, do not leave me, I want to go with you". I think something has happened in me because, without being passionate about heavenly things, I have nevertheless become more attentive to them.

Significant readings

In the evenings, Mother often read biographies of men of God who marked the history of the Church, such as Hudson Taylor and George Müller, who in his time welcomed ten thousand children in his orphanages.

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905), was an Englishman who went to China to talk about Christ. During his 51 years of service there, he founded “The Mission within China” which established twenty missionary posts. He died at the age of seventy-three.

George Muller was originally a thief. God made him a man of great faith. It just shows that God can use anyone, even a thief, to make his glory known.

Born in Germany in 1805, George Muller underwent a dramatic conversion and became a man of prayer. He knew that God provided for all his needs and even the needs of the many orphans he welcomed in Bristol, England. Yet we do know that he started out in his kitchen with a few children, praying for breakfast. Through Muller’s story, we can learn to persevere in prayer and believe that God will answer our requests, in his time.

On March 9, 1898, at the age of 93, Muller was leading a prayer meeting at the church he pastored in Bristol. The next day he was taken to the Father. A whole procession of orphans who had benefited his ministry as well as the members of the church followed his coffin.

I was very interested in these adventures and it was always a good time with the family, as we were well settled in the small living room of the house. These readings prompted questions in me: “How can anyone give up everything for the Gospel?”

Sport and friends

Then it was studies, sports and friends that occupied my time and my ideas. I liked the sport. In our city, it was rugby that fascinated all young people. I remember going to the stadium to watch the game on Sunday afternoon. Parents would agree to my going, as long as I was present at the 5 pm evangelistic meeting! But how to reconcile the two things since the match ended precisely at 5 pm? What crazy races have I not done so as not to be late! I was obviously late. I had to sit in the front row right in front of the preacher. Wet with heat, I dozed off sometimes. I accepted this discipline to please my parents, but it doesn't necessarily change a heart.

Go ahead!

One day during the 5 pm meeting, a Swiss pastor was teaching. We liked this man and his accent. He was speaking slowly and I fell asleep. I dreamed that I was playing ball and, in my dream, my friend was pretending to throw the ball to me, but he was holding it back. So out loud, I suddenly shouted, "Go on!" It was very precisely when the pastor was hesitating and searching for his words. Everyone smiled, seemingly, but no one disturbed me in my sleep. We have often told this story afterwards!!!

"Nigaud"¹

Another day, during a country walk with some friends, we passed a beautiful orchard loaded with very attractive apples. The enclosure was protected by a wall and one of my friends proposed: "Let's jump the wall and go get some apples!" As they were getting ready to climb, I said, "No, no, we mustn't go, God sees us!" The tallest replied, "Nigaud, God sees us, but he won't say anything, come on, let's go!" Still, that day, none of us jumped that wall!

1 "Nigaud": idiot. 2 1 Corinthians 10.2. 3 Exodus 14

New birth

*It was while reading the book *Peace with God* by evangelist Billy Graham that I entrusted my life to Jesus, through a simple prayer written in this book. I was fifteen.*

Water baptism

When I turned 18, one of our church leaders told us one day that a baptismal session would be held 150 kilometers away. He had taken it upon himself to book a bus so that we could all go. Pierrette, my older sister, and I had decided to be baptized without really understanding all the implications of this act. But we wanted to be like the Christians in the Bible and follow Jesus who himself was baptized in water. That was what we had learned!

The baptism of adults was inaugurated by the prophet John the Baptist, for repentance, to prepare the way of the Lord. Subsequently, the first apostles continued to baptize disciples who believed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. A baptism is therefore an act of faith in Jesus Christ. Practiced throughout the history of Christendom and to the present day, it is evidence of a solemn commitment to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is very important to consider water baptism and practice it with new converts.

Jesus said:

*“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”
(Mark 16:20)*

Baptism is also compared in the New Testament to the situation of the Hebrews by the Red Sea as they fled from the Pharaoh of Egypt. This impassable barrier also represents water baptism.

For the Hebrews, Moses raised his staff before the waters, and they parted, thus providing a path between two walls of water where the people could walk and come to the mainland on the other side.

The Christian is submerged “under water” and he emerges for a new life, separated from his past, spiritually speaking, as the Hebrews were freed from Pharaoh.

The day of the baptism

The bus was full for this trip. Of our group, only Pierrette and I were to be baptized. When we arrived, a large number of Christians and several pastors were present. With happy and catchy hymns, the atmosphere was really festive.

The responsible pastor gave an exhortation on the importance of water baptism and then the twenty-five candidates lined up in front of the baptistery.

When it was my turn to go down into the water, the pastor asked me the same questions as to the others but to my surprise he added: “Are you ready to give your life to serve Christ?” And hop, I found myself in the water! Today, I don’t know if I answered the question!

After that, a big meeting gathered us all in the auditorium. Everyone had to say why they were baptized.

I admit that I was impressed in front of this large number of people and especially in front of all the members of our church who knew me well. Moved therefore, and a little hesitant, I nevertheless managed to say a few words. Then the pastors laid their hands on us to receive the anointing of the Holy

Spirit. Indeed, over the next few days, I noticed a change in my mentality.

“... behold, all things have become new”²

Weeks have passed. I no longer had time to go with my friends, and besides, I no longer felt the same attraction to join them. These are simple changes, from the inside, that I have seen. I felt good about myself and happy. Gradually, I realized that there was a presence with me. It was a very new feeling, and I didn't know how to identify it!

“A wise man wins souls” Proverbs 11.30

*Winning souls was really the object of my prayer! I had read a very good book on the subject: *Being filled with the Holy Spirit to win souls* by J.R. Rice. The purpose of my request was therefore well targeted.*

During a special meeting attended by a missionary in Nigeria, I prepared to receive more of this promised anointing. The missionary insisted on being thirsty, very thirsty! However, for three months, I had only one request. So I thought I was a good candidate. Fiery prayers were flowing around me. I was surrounded! But nothing came out of my mouth. Suddenly, an idea came over me and I realized that I was no longer in the anointing. I was dry!

Will you give me your job?

At the same time, in my mind a word called out to me: “Do you want to give me your job?” Why is that? It was the most precious thing I had! I was starting my career and had just received a

² Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5.17

promotion; I hadn't thought for a single moment that my baptism in the Holy Spirit could upset my plans!

Finally, before the dryness of my heart, I surrendered and as if beaten and helpless, I said with a sigh: "Yes, Lord Jesus, I give you my future, my job; take it all."



That was certainly what I was missing because suddenly, waves of love and joy poured out over me. My body was shaken as if by sobs. This lasted until the end of the meeting.

I had put a big handkerchief in my mouth so as not to be heard. I later realized that it was a mistake, because signs like the ability to speak new languages or to prophesy could not be manifested at that time. However, by the grace of God, everything was restored a little later to become a source of renewal and inspiration. Of course, this is all spiritual but it is very real and such an experience is life changing.

The prayer ended, I stood up, my eyes filled with tears. I wanted to hug everyone and as the pastor was very close to me I grabbed him and hugged him. He later said that the anointing was so strong that it also fell on him. God be praised!

Chapter 4

Military service



I was 19, in May 1958, when I received a summons to go to a barracks east of Paris ... transport paid! It was the call for military service. At the time, the French army was in Algeria to maintain order, but we knew that young French people were losing their lives almost every day in the various operations that were being carried out there.

Goodbye

My three sisters, Pierrette, Anne-Marie and H  l  ne were standing on the platform at Bourgoin station, as were our parents, Juliette and Louis, all gathered together, waving their hands to say goodbye. I could see in them sadness and certainly a little anguish to see me go. Will he come back? I was not yet twenty years old!

At the barracks

We were hundreds of men, in uniform, all under the discipline of seasoned and rigorous leaders. We had to obey orders. It was very hard, but strangely I did not feel this humiliation that some people deplored.

Parade in Paris

Our company has been designated for the parade in Paris, on the Champs   lys  e for the great military parade of July 14! This honor has earned us many additional exercises to get us ready for D-Day.

Walking in front of the crowd and passing in front of the official stands to the sound of military music gave us a certain importance. We paid the honors to the President of the Republic, General De Gaulle, newly in office. It was a great memory, plus an improved meal as a reward for our efforts. Our families even got to see us on TV!

Our military training was coming to an end, after dozens of hours of marching, night maneuvers, parades, songs and of course handling of weapons. It was preparation to be a soldier.

Departure for Algeria

Serious things were starting. Crossing the Mediterranean by boat was a first adventure, a little trying for many of us because of the unpleasant seasickness. On our arrival, early in the morning, we were able to discover the beautiful city of Algiers, and without delay, we found ourselves in buses heading to Blida, sixty kilometers away, at the foot of the mountains.

Stone breaker

I was assigned to the air base and tasked, from the first days with three other soldiers, to break three large blocks of reinforced concrete. All day long, with a big sledgehammer in hand, under a blazing sun, we put all our energy into the task.

At the same time, I wondered, “What will happen to me next, if on my twentieth birthday, I am a ‘stone breaker’?” Indeed, it was July 24, my twentieth birthday!

“André, what is the Bible?”

Once again, our days were spent in grueling and very military exercises. In addition, each day, everyone was rated! But in the evening, we were happy to find ourselves in the dormitory

which accommodated about thirty soldiers. Around the big table, discussions ignited, on subjects typical of soldiers, while drinking beer and devouring sandwiches.

One evening, when I entered the room, everyone suddenly fell silent! I joined the group and at that point the questions popped up: "André, what is the Bible? Why are you reading this book? God does not exist, he is a legend and you are wasting your time." After a few moments, I began to calmly respond to the various arguments. These exchanges almost became a ritual, because several evenings in a row, I had to answer many questions.

One day, the most reluctant member of the group was asked to drive a supply truck into a mountain outpost. This mission presented a certain danger because the road was winding and had no less than thirty-two hairpin bends.

The fellow driver had a friend ask me if I wanted to accompany him to be the courier. This meant being armed to ensure safety beside the driver. I answered yes without hesitation. The fact that I accepted his request surprised him very much. It was not to be the only surprise for him ...

With the consent of the superior, we left. But at the foot of the mountain D. asked me: "Do you want to take the wheel?" Again, he must have been surprised because I accepted without discussion (because I liked to drive!).

We arrived safe and sound at the top of Chréa. A fighter plane flew over our convoy to protect it. Taking the wheel was also, as they say, in theory "the place of the dead"! At the top of the peak, we had lunch together and D. asked me some very pertinent questions about faith in God. Yet it was precisely he who was the most opposed of all in our room.

Back at the base, the friends laughed at him because he had given me the wheel; but D. added: "Yes, but André believes what he says, he has the Baraka (blessing)". Afterwards, this same colleague always asked to be in my night patrols. He used to say willingly, "With Andre, we are not afraid of anything!"

These reactions reported by my friends reassured me that I was not alone. The Almighty Lord loved me. He was with me and in me. What a precious asset we have, in all circumstances.

Fisher of souls

Among the men in our dormitory, there was one who was often depressed; you could see it in his face. Regularly, in the evening, he would borrow my little Bible and then ask me many questions. Until the day when we went together to the garage, and there, between two big trucks, he said the sinner's prayer; he gave his life to Christ and was born again! We were two now for the Lord.

Subsequently, four other soldiers went through the same process; we then formed a group called the Protestants. We could meet in the chaplaincy room which was always available. One of these men became a pastor; he is now retired in Alsace!

A big change

I had passed the NCO exam as well as the practical tests. After eighteen months, I had to raise the rank and change my standing: I had to eat at the NCO's mess! Everything was new: a room just for me and a white tablecloth for every meal! However, I no longer had the same relationship with the friends in the dormitory.

These few privileges came to an end as I was transferred for six months to Kabylia, a region in the midst of military operations.

A very special experience

On my return from Kabylia, one day in June 1960, two months before my release, while I was praying and meditating in my room, I had a vision: I saw myself driving a car in the desert to accompany missionaries in Africa! It was pretty accurate because I even had the names of four people in the car I was driving.

Since I did not understand the meaning of all this at all, I did not tell anyone about it ... But six months later, on January 2, 1961, I was indeed driving the second car of a missionary expedition. The four people, recognized in the vision were well of the trip, and me with it!

May God be praised.

Part



THE MISSION
IN CHAD

Chapter 1

Departure for Africa



I had completed two and a half years of national military service in Algeria when in August 1960 I joined my sister Pierrette at the Porte Ouverte in Lux, the Bible school where she was preparing for the mission. I planned to take a few weeks off there before returning to my job.

God was planning a surprise!

In October of the same year, the head of this school organized a trip to Africa to accompany the new missionaries to their places of assignment. Pierrette was part of the group: she was leaving France, her family and her job to live and work in Africa!

The trip was to be made by road, crossing the Sahara from Algiers.

At the end of November, the leader of the expedition, a former missionary full of faith, approaches me and asks me: “Would you like to accompany us to Africa for a three-month trip? Would you drive a car and be responsible for the technical aspects of the trip?”

I was not really surprised by this request because of the vision I had had in my NCO room six months earlier! I was available because I had not yet returned to work at Renault-Berliet. And the four people whose names I had had actually participated in the journey. Thank you, Lord!

And Yet...

On the way to Africa

On January 2, 1961, it was the big departure for the south. We were accompanied by dear friends and our parents to the port of Marseille, France. From the boat, we waved great farewell to them for a long time, confident that God was with us.

Lo and behold, I drove a car through the desert, just like what I had seen in the vision. It was for me a “sign” that I was indeed in the divine will. I didn’t feel compelled or anxious. I was in my place, happy to serve. I drove, of course, and also took care of the mechanics, the photos, and even the shooting of a 16mm film to make a documentary on this memorable journey.

I did not intend to become a missionary. I had a good job in the design office. The company had kept me in my position, and on two occasions the managers wrote to me asking for me. It was clear to me that I was going to Africa and that I would come back to France after three months!

The desert

Crossing the desert with two cars not equipped for sand, with eight people on board, presented an unreasonable challenge. We had twenty-six punctures in the sand and on stony roads, then a serious breakdown because, following an impact, the crankcase of the first car was losing oil. It could have been tragic, but the hand of God was on us: we discovered that we were a few kilometers from a French military post and were able to reach this refuge by towing the first car.

The soldiers and their leader greeted us. We had to work outside the camp, where the wind was blowing very hard, and after three days of effort, miraculously, the vehicle was repaired. We set off again on the sand track, way to Agadez, in Niger.

The evening bivouac was rustic. It was very cold to sleep under the stars and the food was not varied; it was the same menu every night: hot soup, rice and sardines. After twenty-five days of a hard journey, we finally arrived in Fort Lamy, the capital of Chad, which later became the city of N'Djamena.

In Fort Lamy

We stayed for two weeks with a devout Christian lady from Nigeria who greeted us warmly. She was a very popular baker in the region, and it must be said that for us, little French people, her good bread delighted both our taste buds and our hearts!

Attempt to evangelize

We had two evangelistic meetings in which several miracles occurred and the crowd wanted to know more. We therefore spoke of miracles and healings, and several testimonies confirmed the reality of the Gospel. A large number of blind and disabled people followed us; all wanted to be saved. We were very impressed and filled with compassion.

But due to lack of experience, the whole team was afraid of these immense needs and, after two days, we stopped the public meetings. However, I would have liked to see all these unfortunate people receive the grace of God. I was deeply moved by this spectacle.

The journey continues

During the next two months, we traveled in southern Chad, crossed the Central African Republic from east to west and ended our journey in Douala in the Republic of Cameroon. We met with church leaders and held evangelistic meetings, with a public-address system that we plugged into the vehicle's battery.

In all of these places we were made very welcome and have loved everyone we met. Many of these pastors and Christians have asked us to stay with them.

It was for us a real immersion in the spiritual needs of Africa.

Seeing this, you cannot remain indifferent. It was a hundred times the Macedonian's call in Acts 16.9: "Come and help us", or as in Isaiah 6.8: "Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Who will answer?"

Return to Fort Lamy

Pierrette and Marianne, a young missionary, have been appointed to work in the capital, N'Djamena. The other missionaries had returned to their posts.

And I was always there!

For our accommodation, we set up a small two-room apartment located in an area called "Camel Rest", where everything was modest and mediocre. With local materials, we added a terrace: it was our main living space; this was where we spent our days, our prayer times and also where we received our visitors.

This was where we slept again: every night we set up the beds without forgetting the essential mosquito nets.

A modest shower and toilet completed our home. We bought water from itinerant carriers and had no water filter or refrigerator. We prepared meals outside, under a shelter.

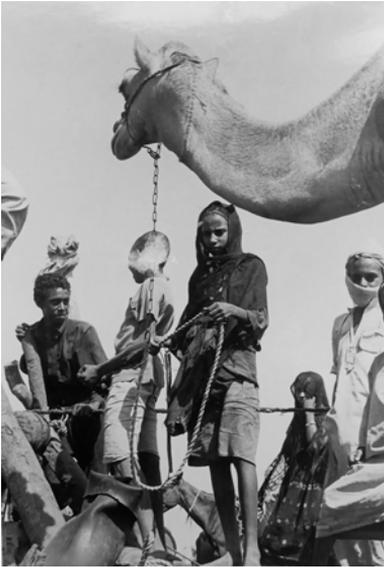
A neighbor once told us: "We are very often sick but you who live with us are not sick with malaria!"

WHO WILL I SEND?

The three months were over! It was time for me to return to France, but I was still traveling! On the night of my twenty-third birthday, I couldn't sleep until very late at night. The next morning, I wrote to the manager in France: "I hesitate to go back now; there would be so much to do here!" But I needed to know what God wanted.

I posted my letter the same day, without knowing that at the same time, in France, the mission director was preparing a letter for me containing these few words: "We, the elders, have come together and we think that we have to change 'André returns' to 'André stays'." However, the mail took four to five days to reach Chad.

What a surprise then when this letter reached me: our letters had crossed paths and, without consultation, they were expressing the same thought. I saw the hand of the Lord there: I had my answer! So instead of the three months planned, I stayed in Chad for three years before returning to France for the first time.



*Water collection
for the herd*



Little girl drawing water

Chapter 2

Repentance and visitation



In August 1961, eight months after our departure from France, we had barely settled down. As the rainy season was abundant, we spent most of our days indoors in our small two-room apartment. We read the Bible and thirsted for spiritual renewal. This is when the Holy Spirit visited us mightily, after several days of setting apart in fasting and prayer.

We received “words” that prompted us to repent deeply, especially to restore fellowship with our fellow travelers. Indeed, relations had been strained in recent months.

I will always remember our visit to Zinder for example. When we arrived in this first town out of the desert, we were exhausted, dusty, and above all hungry. We looked for the Lutheran Mission. When we arrived, about ten missionaries had just sat down to eat, but when they saw us, as one man, they all got up and served us their meal! At first glance, I found it normal, but in the light of the Holy Spirit, I measured the love that had prompted this gesture.

We went through our entire trip to humble ourselves at our lack of gratitude. We prayed for a long time for all of them, who had offered us, as the Gospel says, “a glass of fresh water to drink.” We then wrote several letters to show our gratitude and express our desire for reconciliation and communion. These messages have had a very positive impact.

Forgiving and asking for forgiveness remain the secret of a balanced Christian life.

Glory to the Lord, our spirit then became more sensitive to the Holy Spirit. We didn't know at the time that this experience was going to be quite beneficial for the other battles that lay ahead.

For my part, the understanding of the Holy Scriptures has increased. With passion, I read the Book as if I had never read it before. For example, I had never really cared about the letter to the Romans. Until then, I had found the legal terms difficult to understand, but all of them have enlightened me, especially chapters three through eight of this glorious epistle.

I will also mention the Letter to the Ephesians and the Epistle to the Colossians. These revelations have become the basis of our teachings, which can be summed up as follows: "See as God sees us and act accordingly."

We can say that the fruit of this period was a life of victory. We proclaimed to all those who wanted to hear it: "Jesus is victorious". When faced with a problem or a need, the answer was first: "Jesus is alive. He is victorious. Alleluia."

On the earthen wall of the house, we had engraved in large red letters, this inscription:

*“The God of Heaven will give you success”
(Nehemiah 2.20)*

Anyone could read it. It was the start of our mental transformation, by proclaiming the Word of God.

We were the only foreigners in the neighborhood, but we were well accepted. We worked with the children and a few converts who were learning to know the Lord every day.

Afterward, we ventured out by bike to visit other neighborhoods. We had four meeting points where we held a meeting every week. With the sound system, we started the meetings in the open air, in intersections, and in large public spaces. People were listening to us. We would talk about Jesus, tell about one of his miracles, and then point out his death and resurrection.

Most remarkable, we were able to “lay hands” on the sick for healing according to the Gospel. Never had such a thing been practiced in the country. We were known to talk about Jesus and pray for the sick. This message provoked several negative reactions from religious leaders, but also very favorable reactions; so several families got attached to us to find out more.

For some, we were “wolves under sheepskins”. It was terrible, but fortunately, we did not understand the dialect! We persevered, going every week to visit the hospital, the prison, as well as the lepers’ village. Nothing could have stopped us.

Then the Lord allowed us to meet an international ministry that would have a powerful impact on our own service!



Chapter 3

Beyond what you Think!



In July 1961, evangelist Tommy Lee Osborn led an evangelistic campaign in Lyon, France. Several testimonies have come down to us: Christian Gypsies from Europe and local churches had taken part in the campaign, as well as our mother who had attended “meetings to win souls”.

The notes she sent us were a real spiritual refreshment for us. Moreover, we could see that we were in the same spirit.

From these notes, I had retained a few sentences:

“If you can teach ten people, you can teach a hundred.”

“If one person is healed, many will be.”

It was extraordinary for us; these teachings “widened” the space of our limited intelligence and made room for faith in God. So it was true, we had the testimony of someone who experienced these things in each of his great meetings.

T. L. Osborn taught about divine healing and the miracles of God. We were stimulated in the faith. We were acting as “those who by faith inherit the promises”, it was a good start. We had encouraging testimonials and remarkable decisions for Christ. However, it all still seemed so insignificant when we thought about the big city we wanted to reach.

A chain of prayer

We desired to invite the evangelist to Fort-Lamy. We were so determined that we organized a prayer chain and fasting for six days. There were four of us taking turns every three hours. We have named the prayer room "the Osborn Office".

We were looking for an answer from the Lord so we would know what to do to reach this great city and how to go about it. Could this evangelist be part of our response?

*We were convinced that we should write to the Osborn office in Tulsa Oklahoma, USA. We had no contact with these people; we only had the address listed on the evangelist's little book titled *Healing by Christ*, which had been translated into French.*

We wrote a long letter in French, but it came back to us three weeks later, with the mention "We don't understand your language!". We were bewildered but not downcast. As I had had contact with the director of the American Cultural Center, I asked for his help in translating our precious sesame. Not only did this friend translate it into perfect English, but he added a personal word because he was familiar with our activities.

While waiting for the answer, the time seemed very long! Then suddenly we received a fifty-nine-word telegram, addressed directly from Indonesia, and sent by the Osborn themselves. Our letter had reached its goal!

This telegram informed us that T. L. Osborn and his wife Daisy would arrive in Chad in sixteen days. They asked a collaborator in Belgium to go immediately to N'Djamena, with books, treatises, and all the necessary equipment to show films outdoors.

What a huge surprise

How God had arranged everything, to bring his servants from the other side of the world and meet a brother and his sister deprived of everything and with only the offerings of friends or groups of Christians for support ... the Osborn discovered it later!

For us, it was an extraordinary response.

Pastor M. R. Scotti, a French-speaking American citizen, arrived as scheduled. What immense joy then invaded our hearts!

Start of the pre-campaign

For eight days we used the films, under the watchful eye of Brother Scotti. The goal was to attract the population to strategic places in the city. A large crowd came every night, and we announced the date of the campaign to be held at the municipal stadium.

The Osborns arrived on the announced date. When they got off the plane, they were very surprised to find that we were so young and at the same time so filled with love for the cause of the Gospel. They attended two of our nightly meetings and were quite enthusiastic. All were in favor of the involvement of the Great Campaign. Indeed, our sessions brought together a crowd often estimated at several thousand people. The date of the Campaign was fast approaching.

A hasty and unexplained departure

The next morning, T. L. took us aside to explain that he had to give up on the project. We did not understand this turnaround when we had had so many positive signs so far. We found ourselves with our backs to the wall! Richard Scotti, full of compassion, reassured us.

T. L. Osborn told us privately: "I don't understand myself, but we can't have these meetings! This country is yours. I will do

my best to help you work and win souls for Christ here". He added: "We have to go back." That same evening, they flew to the United States. It was another shock! But from this adventure was born a strong friendship with the Osborns. Pastor Scotti stayed a few more days to encourage us.

Another grace of God

Afterward, we realized that this event was a very unique experience for the Osborn themselves. It took us a few days to integrate these reversals of the situation, but we remained optimistic because from then on, we had "tools" to continue the work and also the promise to receive more aid for Chad.

An unexpected explanation

Three days after the departure of the Osborns, we learned that a failed coup d'état had taken place against the President of the Republic. We then understood better the reason for this abrupt change in our plans and thanked God for His great wisdom and for protecting us.

Indeed, for two weeks, gatherings of more than three people were prohibited. Patrols circulated in the city to ensure security. What would have happened if, during this same period, we had launched the Campaign with a huge crowd?

We hastened to inform the Osborns of the situation and together we glorified God. The Osborn Ministry magazine, "Faith Digest" echoed these unusual and well-conducted events!

Yes, the Osborns left the country along with Brother Scotti. No, there weren't any big meetings with T. L. Osborn, but we had the tools to move forward and practice what we had learned.

Very concrete answers

Our old car was not sufficient to carry this material. I then offered to restore a Land Rover that was priced right and the Osborn office gave us the green light for this acquisition. I had explained that we were going to add an alternator to generate electricity from the car and not from an outside generator. This innovation was greatly appreciated by the Osborns and soon after we received a dollar check to cover the purchase of the Land Rover and its refurbishment!

You will find this story funny, but it was indeed an answer to our prayers before the throne of God.

Missionary expansion

We gained confidence in this new form of evangelism. We have made about four hundred screenings in less than ten years. This is how we visited many villages and set up around thirty places of worship regularly visited and entrusted to indigenous pastors. This was the goal of the Osborn association in which we were involved.

How to establish the Long-Term Mission?

Our ministry has grown with valiant Chadian collaborators. We shared everything with these brothers who represented the future of this Mission.

Until 1969, we had eight full-time evangelists, who received a modest sum of money from the Osborn Association for a year. This precious help could be renewed to evangelize new villages. Over time, the work has paid off. In five years, we had reached about fifty medium-sized villages. We had conventions in each region to meet with God's servants and Christians.

During this period, we were looking to join a global mission, with a view to possible succession and above all to find reinforcement. We had started, Pierrette and I, as independent missionaries and we felt the need to get closer to Christians capable of supporting the Mission in Chad.

It was again the Osborns who helped us: they recommended us to the Church of God in Cleveland (Tennessee, USA). The Headquarters of this assembly sent us James L. Slay, the international representative of the mission. We were touched to see that this man did not display his titles in any way, but instead presented himself simply as "Brother Slay". The presence of this man of God in Chad has given us confidence in the future. He did not despise our beginnings or the precarious comfort that was ours.

His report to Headquarters was positive since a few months later, oh wonder, we had a response that went beyond our thoughts!



1st convention in Fort-Lamy - 1962

Chapter 4

- 1969 -

A trip across the Atlantic



Completely isolated in our home on the Chari River, I once received a letter containing a plane ticket from the Church of God to go to the United States! Imagine my surprise and my joy. The goal was to get to know each other better and allow me to attend the big convention in Dallas, Texas.

Arriving in Dallas, I was able to meet key leaders from Cleveland, Tennessee, and to my surprise, I reunited with T. L. Osborn who was the guest of honor at the Convention. He said to me in very elegant French: “André, we formed the idea of having you with us in Tulsa for a few weeks, do you accept that?” I was moved and overwhelmed by this unexpected invitation and once again realized what a privilege I had; it was beyond my dreams!

The COG¹ Convention in Dallas was held in a huge hotel, in the adjoining auditorium where we were about ten thousand people from all over the country and abroad. It was for me a real immersion in the American dimension.

Visit to the world headquarters of the Churches of God, Cleveland

This church was founded in 1886. It is a proven Christian institution. During my short stay with the leaders, I was able to feel this fraternal affection peculiar to Christians, but also to perceive their great interest in missions abroad. They could have been cold or finicky asking a lot of questions. But everything was done with real kindness and very simply. And so it was with ease that I confirmed our affiliation, in agreement with my brothers and sisters in Chad since together we had accepted the principle.

Arrival in Tulsa, Oklahoma

It was the Osborns who greeted me at the airport. We were happy to meet again to share the news since our first meeting in 1963 in Chad.

The days in Tulsa have passed quickly. From fruitful conversations with T. L. Osborn, I have a feeling of a striking resemblance to Jesus from this man of God. I'm not exaggerating at all. He was always equal, with a strong will, of course, but in all circumstances, it was love that shone through. All of this is difficult to express in words. I sincerely believe that these moments marked and strengthened me in my vision of what a Christian is.

"Imitate those who by faith and perseverance inherit the promises." Hebrews 6.12

I had made up my mind to this and I was hungry to know more since I was at the heart of what I knew to be the best.

A big surprise

The day Madam Osborn, the chief manager, told me that the couple was due in Bogota to lead an outdoor mission and that I would be on the trip, my expectations were high. The Campaign that we couldn't have had in Fort-Lamy in 1963, I was going to live it in Bogota!

Bogota

The capital of Colombia, this city is located at an altitude of 2,624 meters, making it the third-highest city in the world. You must measure your physical efforts when you arrive because you will quickly find yourself short of breath.

The city and its suburbs had a population of 9 million. Also, Colombians were 95 percent Catholic, with the country's population of 45 million.

Considering these facts, I understood that it took faith to venture in to Colombia, and preach a shocking gospel there.

The Evangelical Community was not numerous but very active. Many participated in the five-day preparatory seminar which aimed to teach and train future soul winners.

When the big day arrived, lots of radio and television advertising had announced the event. On the first evening on the vast wasteland, I estimated the number of participants to be around five to six thousand people.

What would happen? At the appointed time, T. L. Osborn spoke and addressed the crowd in Spanish. Contact was established. He gave a very simple message: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

At the time for prayer to receive Christ, many people thanked God and raised their arms to say: Amen, Hallelujah.

Diversion of prayer!

The prayer for the sick was not done with the laying on of hands but in the form of a collective prayer in which everyone was to release their faith in Jesus.

That evening, I remember, T. L. Osborn prayed exclusively for the deaf, yet moments later crutches raised in the crowd could be seen as other paralytics made their way to the platform to testify of their healing. It was glorious, I had shivers down my spine.

A little later T. L. told me: "André we have a problem, I prayed for the deaf and several dozen paralytics were healed!" We laughed heartily as we glorified God for his marvels toward the sons of men.

By the second and third evenings, attendance had increased tenfold. There were so many people that you could see the crowds far into the night. There were even people perched on trucks.

That third evening, without warning me, T. L. announced at the microphone: "We have a French missionary who is going to speak to you!" We needed an interpreter and he asked for it as simply as if we were at a small family gathering. I had imagined that I would be too impressed to speak but, if you have something to share, it's pretty easy.

You will be able to understand why we could love this man of God, so simple and true:

On the way to the hotel, we took a cab to avoid the crowds around him. As there was room in the car, a young man joined

us. It didn't take more than two minutes for T. L. Osborn to undertake the passenger on his soul salvation. The conversation lasted the length of the trip but at the end of the twenty minutes, although he spoke in Spanish, I could recognize the prayer of the young man who gave his life to Jesus. That night I learned a lesson from a true soul winner who seizes every opportunity, good or bad.

Return to Chad

After a stint in Florida and Martinique, I was able to take a few days off with parents and friends, before flying once again to Chad.

During the trip, I thought back to the words of T. L. Osborn: he wished I had stayed in Tulsa to enter the school newly opened by Kenneth Hagin. He told me: "You have given a lot for Chad!" It was an exceptional opportunity that was offered to me, and I did have some hesitation! But I considered it my duty to return to my brothers in Chad.

The enthusiastic reception in N'Djamena comforted me. I had a lot of plans to replicate what I had been through these past few weeks. But soon, the harsh reality of the drought of the 1970s swept over the entire Sahel zone, from Dakar to Addis Ababa in the east.

God renews strength and vision

We brought the churches together and held a General Assembly to clarify the goals of the Mission which was now linked with the Church of God in Cleveland, USA. Everyone was satisfied and eager to continue the journey.

Our affiliation with the Church of God has made it possible to better structure the work and more specifically in the training of leaders.

To this day, it is the branch of the Church of God in Germany that is responsible for the Portuguese-speaking and French-speaking churches in Africa. A Director of Teachings travels to these various countries to strengthen the brothers and sisters by organizing teaching seminars. The work continues under the good hand of God.



Chapter 5

Tributes to the pioneers



This missionary work would have disappeared in a matter of months if it had not been for courageous, faithful and persevering pioneers. In our weaknesses, we were able to give the essence of the word of God, as a seed and an inheritance. This Word has borne fruit that remains. Honor to them all, men and women. I would quote: Pierre Madjirom, Timothée Fidiga, Rombada Shangé, Auguste Djoriot, Jean Bemba, Marie Issembé, Jean-Baptiste, Joël and several others who carried the burden of making known the great salvation in Jesus Christ. To this day, they are already in the Father's house.

The decisions for Christ due to the first public meetings in 1961-62 have had significant bearing with these men and women who faithfully persevered until their last breath.

We would have so much to say about these men and women who humbly and day after day made the faith shine for an eternal future. The new generation must learn from those who came before them, as we know that the trials of the present time are different and certainly more difficult than in the past, as they concern the whole world and we are nearing the end of the Grace of God.

Pierre Madjirom
Pastor from 1961 to 2019

Converted in 1961 in our public meetings, Pierre was:

- the first interpreter,*
- the first baptized in the Holy Spirit,*
- the first full-time pastor.*

He remained faithful during almost sixty years of ministry in N'Djamena, then in Sarh.

He has never left us, faithful among the faithful.

The message of the preaching captivated him, he wanted to know more. He joined us in September 1961, in our neighborhood where we were very accessible. Always discreet and courteous, he was employed as a Caterpillar machine operator. He quit his job to take morning classes. Thus, Pierre became the first student of an apostolic formation. God had chosen him for a larger ministry. For two years, he followed the teachings of the mornings where he found the answers to his questions.

Our first collaborator

Pierre became my interpreter at our weekday and Sunday meetings. It was well accepted by the three ethnic groups that made up our assembly. He had the privilege of being my spokesperson for Christians. He was well acquainted with the doctrine of “dead works” so that he could speak clearly to new converts. For example, when it came to abandoning worldly customs and habits, contrary to the Word of God, only a Chadian could dispute that and show the Gospel.

Pierre was a fervent evangelist who could express himself in the languages used locally, namely French, Arabic and Sara.

Calm and peaceful, he showed great patience and exemplary endurance. He was fulfilling his obligations to his family and to the congregation.

Our lives, ours and those of our collaborators, were offered to God, lived by faith, without guaranteed income or social insurance. For us, this was the norm because we only received voluntary donations from friends of Europe, but always sufficient. We were all in the same boat.

Pierre, with his wife, Saratou, had five children. They lived in the modest little house we lived in in N'Djamena before moving to Mailao.

Our first baptized in the Holy Spirit

1962. One evening we were seven church leaders gathered to study the subject of the baptism in the Holy Ghost. It was an unknown topic to both of them and the meeting dragged on to answer any questions. The New Testament texts eventually won and were well accepted, all or less.

The mystery of "speaking in new languages" was taboo at the time, given all the criticism and opposition heard. Then we prayed for each of them, laying hands on. Nothing happened. We had done what seemed biblical to us and each retired to their homes.

We were asking ourselves questions. Did we say and practice what was right?

Glorious encounter

The next morning, Saratou, Pierre's wife, visited us at Bible class time. Pierre was away, was he ill? Saratou tells us, crying: "Pierre is not doing well at all, he is talking and talking, I do not understand what he is saying. He spoke all night, I left him alone in the house!"

Immediately we understood with joy what was happening to Pierre. Pierrette advised Saratou not to disturb him, then gave her some money to go and buy food at the market.

This first experience in the Holy Spirit was particularly important as it was a first for a Chadian brother. This breached the ministry and the testimony. Pierre joined us the next day for the Bible class. He was indeed under the divine anointing. A positive change was being felt in his prayers and testimony. A new fire had kindled in him.

A faithful pioneer among the faithful

On the one hand, Pierre endured criticism, hardship and opposition, but he also enjoyed the approval of Christians in the congregation and beyond. He was listened to and he had everyone's respect.

The fire spreads

The testimony of this experience has spread. Young college students came to us. It was Pierrette who welcomed them: she was often at home and above all, she could talk to the young girls who timidly came to meet her. Everyone wanted to know more about this "new Gospel" in Chad. They would testify to others in high school and college. It was so beautiful to see their thirst to read again the gospels and the Acts of the apostles.

In a prayer meeting with a few of them, boys and girls, some received the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Positive changes have taken place in their lives and even in their Christian youth group.

One day a missionary visited us at our “neighborhood shelter”. He had serious complaints about us, given the seniority of their church in Chad: “Why do you want to hijack our youth with your Pentecostal doctrines?” Then, considering our precarious environment, without electricity, running water, or fridge, he suddenly admired our dedication. Looking at the earthen wall, he silently read the verse inlaid in red on the earthen wall:

“The God of Heaven will give you success.” Nehemiah 2.20

Then, we exchanged more or less cordially on our opinions and we parted fraternally!

First full-time pastor

As early as 1964, Pierre became the first full-time pastor, in charge of the assembly of the capital. Which freed us to go beyond the city.

Over the years, Pierre has become a centerpiece of the nascent Church of God. There would be so much to say about his journey as a pastor. Pierre held the torch until his last breath, during 58 years of service to the Master. He ran the race and won the crown of justice.

Pastor Pierre died at the age of 83 in his family home in Sarh. The funeral ceremony was attended by a large number of believers who came to pay their last respects.

Messages of condolence have come from different places, such as this one from a pastor in Niger:

Brothers in Christ,

We learned of the death of our patriarch Pierre Madjirom who has just left

us today April 07, 2019 in Sarh. The minister of God has been a great tool in the hands of God to reach much of our country through church planting and has a great hand in disseminating the Gospel through literature (bookstores). He finished his race and just got ahead of us. Our condolences to his family, to the brothers of Moyen-Chari and Chad. He left us with a great challenge to take up at a time when the world needs the Good News the most. All the brothers here in Niger send you their sincere condolences.

Adoum.

Several pastors from other denominations joined in this final farewell. It was the token of approval of this man of God. Madji means » excellent «.

Timothy Fidiga
A pastor from 1961 to 2019

Timothée Fidiga was from the large village of Éré. He joined us in October 1961 and became a pillar of the Church of God alongside Pierre Madjirom and Rombada Shanzé. He passed away in May 2019.

In 1961, he lived in Fort-Lamy on the banks of the Chari River with his family. This is where we started a weekly meeting. He assumed the role of chief of the district. The men went fishing and gardening and the wives sold the fresh produce. On Sunday, everyone joined us for worship in town.

When the neighborhood was evicted, Timothy got new land for himself, not far from the road, and another for the church. The majority of this assembly was from Éré. Deprived of a garden, Timothée changed jobs to become a photographer. I have always had great respect for this strong and rigorous man for himself and for the Christians he taught. His church has grown in number.

We frequently went to the main square for evangelism on Sunday afternoons. It was like a party; equipped with loudspeakers, we could give testimonies as well as short preaching. Timothy and the members of the church built their place of worship; the Mission has provided to buy the sheets to cover the roof.

The first visit to Éré

It was July 1962. It was 350 kilometers of sandy track. On our arrival, a delegation of notables led us to each islet of this atypical village, while telling us the history of the place. The village chief honored us with his presence and we were able to explain to him the purpose of our visit. No European visited this village because it was very difficult to access.

The last place to visit was a round hut with a straw roof. It was late and it was already dark. We entered following our guides and to our surprise, we heard the sound of chains, without being able to distinguish what was the cause!

But thanks to low light, we finally saw a man bound in his hands and feet! It was a startling discovery for us. On our way out, we were given a few explanations: we were told that at times the man became violent and dangerous. What a challenge for us who had no experience in this area!

We found that everyone around him, including his wife, {was dominated by fear and even, for some, by great fear.

In the evening, we brought a strong exhortation, based on everything we knew, explaining that at the cross, Jesus had conquered darkness, fear, disease, and demons. It was a new message for all of them. To conclude, we had a group prayer repeated which consisted of declaring verses of scripture. Then we prayed for the deliverance of Moussa.

The next day, we had to leave because the rainy season threatened to seriously deteriorate the road back.

Anyway, in September, Moussa came to Fort-Lamy; he had to make a long journey, first by canoe on the Logone River, then by truck; he then had to search for our house in the big city.

He finally arrived with a young child who knew us well. A little surprised at this huge, strong but smiling man, I asked who he was. Without answering, he simply raised the sleeve of one of his forearms to show us the swelling of flesh, the result of weeks of suffering. I hugged him, I was so small in front of him! We were amazed and amazed that this brother had come out of the round hut with the straw roof!

He said he wanted to come and thank us, but what had we done for him? May all the glory come to God.

We learned four years later that Moussa, who had a heart problem, had died, but had never had a relapse.

We did not know then what this large village would hold for us, ten years later, with the construction of a dike and the establishment of six churches in the nearby region.

Timothy was a solid and rigorous man whom I liked. I saw him again in 2015, at his home with his wife and with only 21 people in his house!

He invited me to come back the next day for a meal and to meet some elders.

This friendship in Jesus is most precious. These relationships are true, simple, and deep.

Madame la Préfète de Bongor, who was covering Éré, knew me by hearsay. I visited him with André Adogré my former and faithful interpreter.

This great lady made me a surprising proposition that stuck in my memory: "Mr. André we want you to stay with us and you can even have your grave here!" This offer made me smile but it also touched me a lot.

Timothée Fidiga passed away in October 2019 after serving for 58 years.

The funeral ceremony, which was held at his home in Chagwa, drew a large crowd, coming from the town and several villages, including Éré. Other pastors from different churches came to pay a final homage to this quiet man but strong in the Lord. The ceremonies lasted for a week, which is huge in the tradition. The meetings took place above all at night, with testimonies, songs, and the much-needed cup of tea.

Being away at that time, I was only able to send a letter by email. But it has been read publicly, which has been my consolation after so many years of fellowship to win souls for God.

Rombada Barthélémy Shanzé.
An Evangelist from 1962 to 1982

Twenty years of dedication

Rombada was a “street child” like dozens of other children in the capital Fort-Lamy. He knew all the tips for getting food and dressing. The Lord touched him at one of our open-air public meetings in 1962. He became interested in the message and followed the children in their songs and parades.

His conversion was a magnificent miracle. We quickly noticed the fruits of the new birth as he let go of his old friends and bad behavior.

He spoke local Arabic very well and therefore became a good interpreter. After having followed a training with the pastor Pierre Madjirom, Rombada accompanied me to evangelize in the villages. Sometime after his beautiful conversion, Rombada added Shanzé to his name, which meant “changed”. This is why he was often called “Shanzé”, and no longer Rombada!

New Mission Field

Subsequently, we appointed him an evangelist in Koundoul, where he remained during all his years of service with his wife and their little boy.

A chapel, a well

The Koundoul congregation grew and the Mission helped to build a chapel: with its tin roof and its beautiful white facade bearing the sign “Church of God”, it was clearly visible from the road, and thus well known to all passengers on the route to the South. In the 1970s, a great drought hit the country. Water was becoming scarce for men and small livestock. It was Rombada who told us about the plight of the villagers.

They had gathered in front of the church and asked me to build a large cement wall. I wanted to, but how? Once again, things were going well since it was the time when I had to return for a holiday in France. I had the opportunity to talk about this need



at the Rotary Club and in one evening the money was there for the Koundoul well! I had informed the brethren that I had prayed that I would not have to use the mission money for social, and God had responded. I never had to add a single franc! This is how we built the first large cement well. Right in front of the church, he attracted everyone to draw clear water, to everyone's delight!

A well can hide 45 others!

After that, one of our European donors asked me to start a bigger project: We had to build 45 new wells!

This is how we called in a qualified volunteer. Pierre Amez-Droz came with his family from Switzerland and it was he who managed all the work, even making technical improvements.

The man “who talks with God”

Shanzé testified in all the surrounding villages, so he was very popular. He was a good worker for the Lord. The Mission provided him with a bicycle with which he rode hundreds of kilometers throughout his service. He was well known to all as a good man, a man who was “able to talk with God”.

A man of prayer

Rombada Shanzé prayed a lot even at night. The sick came easily to him, often Islamized people.

One evening, a neighbor came urgently to Rombada to ask him to come and pray for his wife. Without hesitation, he accompanied the man home. The wife was due to give birth and the situation was becoming critical. The women were crying loudly outside the door. It should be noted that the nearest hospital was 25 kilometers away, and no vehicles were available for transport.

Quite naturally, Rombada asked for silence, then, with the husband, they entered the room. The woman had been in labor since morning without any progress and it was late! In the presence of the husband, Rombada called out to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, in a surge of faith, he commanded, “In Jesus’ Name, the child be released immediately and joy replace suffering.”

It didn’t take long for everyone to hear the women’s “You-You” announcing the birth of a beautiful male baby.

This testimony was significant because it was about a Muslim family. Thereafter, the husband maintained great esteem for the evangelist and always respected the emerging Christian congregation.

The lasting fruits of a conversion

His name was Paul and he lived with his wife in the village of Koundoul. They got saved with the evangelist Rombada in the 1960s.

The couple had a serious problem: the wife had lost successively, two babies shortly after birth. We were together in Koundoul and with Pierrette, we suggested praying for the wife who was very depressed.

God is good and he responds to the cries of those who fear him. Over the next five years, Paul and his wife had two boys. A few years later, Paul decided to return to his village. He started evangelism and informed us that they had three villages with about 40 believers.

The day came when I was able to spend several days there exhorting the believers and undertaking the construction of a shelter that could serve as a meeting place. The environment was primitive, but the joy of these converts gave courage. I had taken a well-stocked “caisse-popote¹” with me but found that at the end of my week-long visit, I had not even opened my stash. The locals provided my food every day, and I have never forgotten their generosity.

Paul’s sons grew up and became ardent Christians who went to the villages and speak out on the power of God for today. Paul has aged but his succession was assured with his two sons! Léo-Mbassa is a village in the hinterland of Gounougaya. With several brothers from the church of Éré located 20 km away, we arrived at nightfall. Four people greeted us and informed us that they had scheduled a meeting for the evening.

¹ I had to be able to feed myself in the brush, so I used to take provisions, one plate, cutlery... and a small gas stove!

When the meeting started, I found that I had to speak with two interpreters (Chad has over 70 different dialects). I was worried about the “Mamas”: what were they going to understand? Despite everything, we gave the message whose theme was the blood of Jesus. I knew that this ethnic group was animist and practiced customs. Nothing was done without offering a blood sacrifice, either to sow and reap or to build a new house.

Despite this, I brought the message, then asked who would believe and give up the customs. In the dark, I could see a few hands going up. As usual, we invited those who were ill to report. And there, dozens of people stood up. After giving some instructions we set the next meeting for the next morning.

Early the next day, many of these people were already in front of the hut where we were sleeping!

What is wonderful is that a group of believers has been formed in this village under the leadership of an evangelist who stayed in the place for a few weeks.

In 2016, I returned to the same village: quite a several Christians had built a new church built in baked blocks, with a beautiful frame. I was blown away, but even more so to see that the leaders of this assembly were first-day converts, forty-five years ago. Jesus said, “I will build my church,” meaning the assembly of believers. We are workers with God, may all the glory come to him.

A devoted servant

Rombada Shanzé was always available and committed to the cause of Christ. If I told him, "We're going south," he would grab his bag and be able to join me right away. We used T. L. Osborn films in every new village we visited. Thus, the ground was prepared to say more, during our next visits.

We have won many souls for Christ with him outside of Koundoul and together we have witnessed beautiful healings. Glory to God!

Jean Bemba

A teacher from 1966 to 1980

Founder of the school in Bougoumène

In the village of Koudou-Meschri on the southern route, we established a church following several evangelization sessions. The group of believers was about sixty people, not counting the many children.

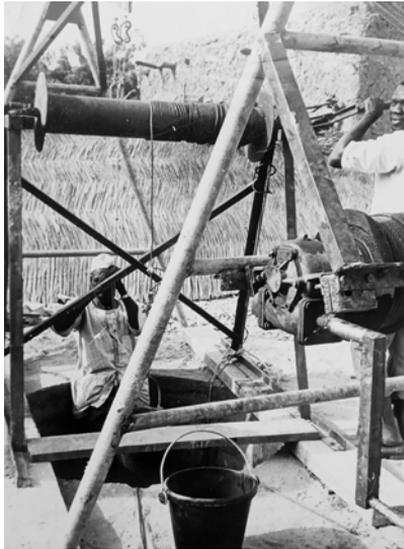
One evening we were having a public meeting with the films of T. L. Osborn and people from neighboring villages joined us. We had won some twelve people that night to Christ. Then we prayed for the sick individually.

An unusual request

The Peul chief of a nomadic encampment was present. At the time of prayer, I came before him and asked him what his request was. He was carrying a "five battery" radio set, the best of the time, beautiful and bulky! While I was looking at this beautiful object, he said to me seriously pointing his radio. "Daddy, pray for my radio, it doesn't speak anymore!" I suddenly came back to earth and smiled. Yes, that was his problem! Now and then we had this kind of anecdote that reminded us of the importance of having a good interpreter.



Rombada (on the right) with his bike!



Equipment to build the 45 wells.



Before the evening meeting



New christians in a village in Mayo-Kebbi.

“Feed them yourselves!”

After the meeting, we took some time with the Christians. Five men, all fathers of families, had a particular request: “There is no school here. The nearest is thirty-five kilometers away. You have to come and teach us! Almost immediately, I replied, “But, no, it cannot be, we are not here to teach in schools, but to teach the Gospel!” Then suddenly, I remembered this injunction that Jesus gave to his disciples when he said to them: “You give them something to eat!” Luke 9.13.

We left the village but these words continued to call out to me: “You give them something to eat”.

Indeed, it was not about physical food but it was about learning to read and write, to develop and eat better tomorrow.

Without subsidy but by faith

A few weeks later, during a Christian Convention in N’Djamena, we appealed to the youth. “We are looking for a young man who has finished college to open a school in a village!” To our surprise, Jean Bemba presented himself without constraint, ready to begin. How easy it was, thank you, Lord!

God does not despise small beginnings

In the village of Koudou-Meschri, Jean hung the blackboard under a tree which served as a classroom. About thirty children were gathered, seated on logs. Their dialect was so complicated that Jean had to learn their local language! He then began to teach the first rudiments of French. It relied mainly on simple hymns and the repetition of short sentences. There were joy and even enthusiasm in the little ones, and the adults admired them. The parents provided a bedroom for the teacher and they offered him daily food. It was their contribution to have their school!

In 1967, Christians began building a chapel using local materials. Thus, the church served in the morning as a well-shaded classroom for the little ones and the evening for Bible teaching for adults.

We received some donations to buy school supplies. Financial support was also needed for the two and later three teachers. To our great joy, God provided without our having to draw on the resources of the Mission.

Thus, this service started humbly for isolated children grew. It all started with the goodwill of everyone and their love to serve others through the mercy of our God.

Jean Bemba has been faithful and persevering during all these years. The village elders respected him. He was the village teacher, helpful for young and old. Jean founded his own family and built his house. He had adopted the village and people gave him back.

1970. An unexpected project

During the third year of school, a notable from the neighboring village asked me to come with Jean. We went to the scheduled appointment. Without delay, he told us: "Mr. André, make the plans to build a school; I provide the masons, the bricks, the cement, and the hard school will be in Bougoumène". Imagine our surprise! Everyone in the village agreed because Bougoumène was less than two kilometers away and represented no more than a walk for the children!

So, we had a permanent school, at no cost to the Mission and an opportunity to have more children from the surrounding villages. The construction went according to plan, until the inauguration

day, celebrated with joy. The transfer of the school from Koudou-Meschri to Bougoumène did not cause any difficulty and rather engendered a feeling of pride. The children would say to each other: "Now we have a real school!" The big white walls were eye-catching and people were asking questions: "How do we have this school here in the village?"

The school has become a bustling center. Those concerned were proud of their new facilities!

It now had three teachers to ensure the full cycle of primary school. It was already the sixth year and for the first time, the school had to present candidates for the Leaving Certificate. In the exam, one girl in our group passed brilliantly, as well as several boys! We were proud of our children and of the teachers who gave themselves courageously over the years, enduring the modest life of a small village.



Bougoumène - Welcome of the children

1970-76. Years of great scarcity

It is also in this school, under the leading of Jean, that we have organized several holiday camps for young people from 10 to 15 years old. It was in July-August, amid a food shortage. Eighty children from the city and our different assemblies, Koundoul, Wallia, Kornari, participated. It was an opportunity to feed them well and to teach them stories from the Bible.

On the first day, everyone was reserved and weak. But from the first good meals, the atmosphere had changed and it was necessary to reduce the playing times so as to follow the program prepared by the two Christian professors who had come from the Evangelical College in the capital.

Parade

In less than three days, all the children had regained their energy and were playing without restraint. Rousing songs presided over the great weekend parade in which everyone, young and old, participated. The sound of the tambourines punctuated the march, all glorifying the God who had done great things for us! The inhabitants of Bougoumène came out of their houses to contemplate the joy of the children.

Afterward, the memories of these two weeks of camp were told in the houses. Never has such a thing existed before.

Many of these grown children have assumed responsibilities in the church; one of them was the secretary of the Church of God. "Do the works of God while it is the day." From John 9.4.

Cultivate in the off-season for food

Living with the villagers is not the most difficult. They are hardworking and operate with the seasons. With the first rains in May, the villages become very lively and everyone goes to the field as soon as the sun comes up.

At the first heavy rain, the seeds of hope should be sown on well-prepared grounds. The children follow the parents and rejoice while playing in the puddles. It's rather a day of celebration!

Unfortunately, the reality is not always so, given the vagaries of the weather. If the second and third rains are delayed too long, the seeds will dry out in the soil. We have seen this situation where many peasants ran out of seed after sowing three to four times!

This kind of situation is at the origin of famines in various parts of the Sahel. It is, therefore, necessary to design crops that are adapted to produce out of season, but this requires favorable conditions and a minimum of investment.

We were in the 60s and 70s, Chad was still a young republic, and innovation was encouraged by the authorities.

This is how the project for a "Market gardening school" was born in the village of Koudou-Meschri, a project which was able to come to fruition thanks to the help of three expatriates sent by a European Christian organization. These three valiant capable volunteers formalized future activities. As the site was close to the river, the project included a motor pump and hand tools, as well as housing for future apprentices.

Thus, in the first year, eighteen young men between the ages of sixteen and nineteen regained motivation and a certain pride.

The schedule included, in the morning, practical lessons in setting up market gardening plots for different vegetables, and in the afternoon, French and arithmetic lessons, accompanied by lessons on agriculture and market gardening. The school cycle lasted two years. Our goal was to train 60 market gardeners over five years. And that's what happened.

From training to business creation

The innovation didn't stop with training our young people: we also helped the first students to start their businesses. This is how, along the Chari River, large gardens have sprung up, producing melons and various vegetables that are easy to transport.

Women who sold products at the large market in the capital came to stock up with their pick-up. It has even happened that, in a period of insecurity and drought, refugees and residents of neighboring Cameroon have crossed the nearby border to come, too, to collect fruit and vegetables.

All these young men who became gardeners created their own jobs and so I later found four former students in their native village in the south, towards Bongor, Éré, and Kélo.

I wasn't personally involved in this project because I was running out of time and the technicians were doing a good job. But it was with happiness that I saw the development of these young people who were able to settle down and get married. All of this did not happen overnight!

70,000 onions!

The Market gardening school having closed its doors after five years, the land of Koudou-Meschri was available as well as the motor pump; It was then that our Jean Bemba suggested working with the mothers of the village to grow onions.

It was a good idea. The onion is part of African cuisine and precisely in that year, there was a shortage. Farmers in the north of the country and even in Niger did not have a good harvest. The prices in the local market were getting exorbitant.

Drawing on the lived example, the mothers, under the direction of Jean, prepared the plots to accommodate the onion plants to be transplanted.

What an adventure! You had to succeed because mothers already dreamed of going to the markets to sell their products. To speed up transplanting, I had imagined having a “template” made which, pressed into the damp soil, would mark the hole for 150 onion plants. In three or four days, no less than 70,000 onion plants were established! The onion does not require a lot of water, so watering could be done by each woman managing her plot.

That year, I ate onion every day in all its forms, as did the people of Koudou-Meschri! It was also the year I was supposed to go to France. I wondered if I had picked up some pests while walking barefoot around the gardens.

When I arrived at the Croix Rousse Tropical Hospital in Lyon, I saw that I was a case for the Professor who examined me. In front of his students, he asked me:

- Do you drink filtered water?*
- Not always!*
- Do you wear good shoes?*
- Not always.*
- Do you often have malaria?*
- Never!*

All my answers were recorded negative. He finished: "We will see the results of the analyzes tomorrow!"

The next day, still in front of his students, the Professor noted that all the results were also negative!

I didn't have to explain myself, but I saw God's favor towards me: during three years of stay, he had protected me even from small beasts!

Still, I had a moving thought for the "mamas" who had produced all these onions: Chad is a good country to serve God by serving the brothers.

When you have to manage the abundance

The abundance of the harvest became a problem: How to go to the markets to sell these many bags? It was then that some moms decided to travel with their bags of onions, with the understanding that the proceeds would be for them. Finally, a truck transported the bulk of the harvest to the South and again, it was Jean Bemba with four mothers, who devoted themselves to selling the onions in the markets in the South.

These very “down to earth” experiences were not the main purpose of our Mission, but in the 60s and 70s, it was more opportune to demonstrate than to explain.

Our role in these projects was to oversee their proper functioning and to show that with God we can do great things.

These initiatives may seem insignificant today, but in those days it was truly opening up completely new horizons, an innovation that the younger generation has largely exploited. For this, we need women and men who carry a message of faith and who have a burning desire to “serve the brothers”.

The Darby version translates Hebrews 10.24 this way:

“... and let us beware of one another to stir up love and good works.”

This testimony from Jean is admirable because I have been for little in the development of these activities. John had grasped the message “what you have received, give it” and through his initiatives, he has been a light to everyone.

The sudden death of Jean without any specific reason shocked everyone. This was what we were experiencing at a time when many of our loved ones went missing, murdered by armed men. Among all the brothers, none of us was able to attend Jean Bemba’s funeral!



*Ready for the parade– School of Bougoumène with Jean Bemba
(on the right)*

Chapter 6

Mailao, our HQ



1965. We had four small schools attached to the church in several villages along the main road from N'Djamena to the south of the country. Every month, we received help from our friends in France and Switzerland to support the schools. This is what allowed us to run these schools of 40 to 80 students each, simply by having faith that God would continue to provide through these gifts.

Pierrette's project

That year, Pierrette dared to venture out with three young girls, further south of the capital, in search of a piece of land, to organize youth camps.

She found a village that offered good reception conditions. Paying a courtesy visit to the village chief, she expressed the purpose of her visit: "just to look for a piece of land!"

At this precise moment, Pierrette had not the slightest idea that this visit was going to create new avenues for witnessing.

The chief immediately offered half of his land. This land was perfectly located between the main road and the Chari River. The price was affordable, the deal was done. We became owners of two acres of land in our future village of Mailao.

I visited the chosen place and from there, an idea began to germinate in us: shouldn't we come and live in the bush?

A first camp

The first youth camp brought together girls and boys aged 10 to 16. Mailao volunteers came to clean and weed the area. Soon we had to build local shelters for the children. Straw and wood were needed for the structure. We received help from the strong hands of the village.

This first camp for 50 children was a success. Each child told their parents about their experiences. Everyone mentioned the “good food” and the football in particular! But it was not just that: there was a Bible lesson every morning and, using the images of the “flanellographes”, we told the story of the patriarchs. We sang a lot and we walked in the village, to the rhythm of the tom-tom.

This experience made us discover the real need of youth. This ministry had to be continued and, with the grace of God, a second rally and then others were considered. The children of our churches have been privileged.

A second camp

Managing 60 to 80 children was a big responsibility, considering the dangers of the river and the small bush beasts, like scorpions, snakes and also mosquitoes! Nothing negative affected any of them during the ten days. We have realized the protection of the Lord. At the end of the camp, we made an appointment for the next vacation! God be praised!

An important decision

The idea of moving to the Domaine of Mailao was becoming more and more present for us. The fact of leaving the city where we enjoyed a certain comfort then made us think. But we wanted to obey this new call to better serve the isolated.

Then the cost of living in the city became too heavy for us. God's choice was the best. We were enthusiastic.

We built a house made of local materials out of dried clay bricks (as it used to be in Egypt) and put up a good tin roof to protect against the rains. We lived a simple life, without running water, without electricity or telephone, like the people of the village. Mailao became our base and we lived there like pioneers. We could use the river water for all our needs. The help of a few friends in France and Switzerland greatly facilitated our installation.

We quickly hired a qualified gardener. This gardener was our survival because the local market had only cereals to sell but no vegetables.

In addition, travel was sometimes complicated. During the rainy season, the road was not very passable because of the rains and sometimes trucks blocked across the road; and during the dry season, we occasionally encountered elephants or other animals looking for the way to the river.

We have had great adventures with wild animals! I once found myself surrounded by several buffon cobes, a sort of antelope the size of a horse; the male had a huge trophy; they were peaceful, but they blocked my way. I stopped my vehicle and got out; they were staring at me, one of them came close enough to my van and brushed against the body, but I wasn't scared! You just had to wait ...

Depending on the season, we received the visit of elephants, and generally, they did not cause damage. We could tell they had passed because their traces are well recognized. This is how we saw one day that one or more of these pachyderms had come behind the house and that one of them had walked very close to the tomato plantations, but luckily without knocking over the stakes!

Other misadventures await everyone on the road

Father Colson from the Catholic mission stopped by our house, as usual, to greet us and then collect some pink grapefruits from the garden before joining N'Djamena. At the time of departure, it was already dark and we urged him to stay and sleep at our house because, in the evening, the dust made the road dangerous. As he really wanted to leave, he took the road but some thirty minutes later, a large car arrives at our house and informs us that the person who left us has problems and is asking for our help. We left right away without forgetting to take a rope to tow the car if necessary.

Indeed, there was a problem! Father Colson recounted his adventure:

"I saw a lot of fog and there was a terrible shock. I had come under the belly of an elephant crossing the road. Luckily he left without doing any further damage."

As Father Colson had gone on vacation to France, his car was exhibited at the Renault garage for several weeks and this unusual story toured the capital. Everyone wanted to see this vehicle whose hood was now shaped like an elephant's belly! Everyone was telling the story, adding details to embellish the event!

On his return from vacation, Father Colson returned with a brand-new car while telling the real story.

Thanksgiving in the garden

We bought a motor pump which supplied the garden and the house with water, a second-hand kerosene fridge to keep food fresh, and a water filter for drinking water. We had neither electricity nor telephone. We used wick lamps called "fireflies",

but their lighting was very poor for reading. It didn't matter to us though, because we were really happy to live far from the constraints of the city, and closer to the villagers. Everything was new. I think it was the best years of our missionary life.

The fishermen stopped at the foot of the house to sell the fresh fish of the night; so, we didn't have to go very far to do our shopping! We once bought them a captain who weighed between 30 and 40 kg!

The harvest of the first vegetables from our garden was the subject of thanksgiving. Every day we ate excellent food and could even sell our surplus vegetables to people passing through. It was a valuable contribution that helped secure the wages of the workers.

Pierrette's consultations

Intrigued at first, the villagers wondered what we had come to do in their village, but when Pierrette, our nurse, began to provide a consultation for the women and their children every morning, the connection was made.

The inhabitants understood that our house was an answer to their immediate problems. The men in turn visited us, and the relationship of trust was gradually established. Many even remember Miss Claire-Lise with her guitar! She was a Swiss volunteer who had replaced Pierrette for several months in Mailao and served another three months in the church of N'Djamena with children and women.

The news of these consultations spread to all the villagers; we were theirs. I noticed that during the ten years spent in Mailao, we have never been robbed or threatened when there was no fence or security gate at our place. We have lived "the good Africa". We probably couldn't live the same way today.

Evangelization of the village

Once we were accepted by the locals, we held public meetings in Mailao. Once a week, we screened an evangelistic film in the evening; the whole village was attentive. We could preach to everyone, without distinction, including Muslims, and we urged people to hold on to Jesus Christ.

After a month or more, a group was formed with about fifty people; they were the first members of the church in Mailao.

It takes time for the Word of God to take root in the life of a new convert. It is not the work of a few days but a whole life.

That is why missionaries give many years of their lives before they see “the good seed grow and bear fruit.” Hallelujah - Amen.

We would have so much to say about our life in Mailao and its villages. We had wonderful encounters and welcomed visitors who liked to stay with us for a few days or more. Everyone contributed with their skills to bring this place to life, a place which has become emblematic for all of us. Several adventures with hinds, warthogs, and occasionally elephants reminded us that we were in the bush in the real Africa that we loved so much.

Long live the bride!

We had the joy of celebrating Pierrette’s wedding with Fernand Lasnet, one of the qualified experts attached to the market gardening school. The party was held in N’Djamena and it was in Mailao that the young couple resided and welcomed the birth of a baby girl named Sophie. Two years after the marriage, the little family returned to France; Pierrette had served nearly eight years in Chad. Her memory has remained anchored in the memory of the oldest.

During these years of service, she assumed an important role among others: it was she who regularly updated friends in Switzerland and France and maintained correspondence with the Osborn office. She also managed the needs of the house and had a great influence on everyone.

On their return to France, Pierrette taught in a girls' high school; her husband worked in a modern printing company where his technical skills were highly valued. Unfortunately, he died a little before his sixtieth anniversary. Ms. Pierrette Lasnet lives to this day in our hometown of Bourgoin-Jallieu.



Youth camps for children from 10 to 16



Waiting to be baptized in the Chari River



1st brick in Loumia.



Chapel construction in progress

Chapter 7

Éré, this big village in the middle of the plains of Mayo-Kebbi



Éré is in the middle of a huge plain crisscrossed by the Logone River, west of the Mayo-Kebby region. The inhabitants are mainly fishermen and rice farmers. They are used to the September floods and therefore grow their rice profitably. The dwellings are built on islands submerging the usual flood level; but in September 1972, a disaster devastated Éré and the surrounding villages: a great flood spread to Mayo-Kebbi, interrupting all human activities on the ground.

I lived in the village of Mailao and had booked the amphibious plane from the MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship, a Christian organization), during the rainy season. I planned to go to Éré, 350 km from N'Djamena.

It was an amazing sight when the small plane landed on the Chari River and came at the foot of our house. The inhabitants of the village of Mailao were caught between terror and admiration. Then they saw me get on the plane.

As we flew over Éré, despair seized us in front of this completely flooded village. There were no streets or roads, only canoes carrying people to the village. We took pictures to preserve the memory of this exceptional situation.

The Cessna aircraft landed on the Logone again and the pilot approached the island where the church was located. People screamed in surprise and excitement as they saw me get off the miraculous plane. The women began to sing: "André has come down from heaven!" The pilot continued his journey further south, leaving me alone with the villagers.

The river had flooded the village overnight and continued to damage mud houses and grain silos. I stayed with these people for five days in total desolation.

But the Word of God is alive! As I wondered why the Holy Spirit had brought me to this place that day, in the silence of the night, I was led to read and meditate on Exodus, chapter 3, where the Lord declares:

"I have seen the suffering of my people and have come down to deliver them."

(Exodus 3:7)

I had the answer to my question: God is with us and leads us to help these people.

General convocation

The next day, all the notables of the neighborhoods gathered in the house of the village chief. Women also joined the group because they had some things to say. All eyes were on me, the stranger and the missionary who loved them. They had all known me very well for ten years.

Everyone described the disaster. A woman added that the dead had been buried the day before in the village but the bodies had been taken out from the ground and were washed up by the flood. The rice granaries were collapsing. The survival of the village was threatened.

The village chief appointed me as a spokesperson to meet the Minister of Roads and ask him to bring a “caterpillar machine” to the village to build a large dike. When my turn came to speak, I read the text of the night in Exodus 3.7. A glimmer of hope began to appear.

“Only God can save us,” I added. The solution was there, but how were things going to turn out? At that point, I dared to explain to them: “A Caterpillar won’t be possible, but we could find you tools; you can have shovels, pickaxes, and wheelbarrows.” Their eyes lit up and they enthusiastically joined.

Time of departure

At the end of the five days planned, the plane was there and I left. I had had some experiences with the brothers, a very special adventure.

Why me? Why should a missionary be involved in helping this village? Why did I receive this Bible verse as a “Rhema” overnight? The village had about 2,200 people, mostly Christians, with three evangelical assemblies including “the Church of God”.

They all trusted me because they had witnessed our activities and many miracles over the past ten years.

our project is too small!

I went to N’Djamena where I informed the brothers of the situation. I was able to meet the Minister of Public Works, but without a result; several regions were in emergencies.

After having written a report describing in detail the natural calamity of these villages, I went to the FAO office¹. The representative took into consideration my report, told me that I had to add photographs, and informed me that he would send

¹ FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization – a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.

the request to Headquarters in Rome; he would inform me as soon as possible of the rest of the process!

Hurray! A positive response came from Rome; however, the representative clarified to me, "Your ten-thousand-dollar project (at the time) is too small. It takes a minimum of fifty thousand dollars to be taken into account!"

Imagine how surprised I could have been. After a moment of reflection, I suddenly said to him:

- Mr. Representative, we have five villages which suffer from the same floods.

- Thank God! Éré will therefore be the pilot project.

In no time at all, it wasn't one village to save, but five!

Wheelbarrows in spades!

I had requested that hand tools be provided for every worker, including women. Shovels, picks, buckets, and wheelbarrows totaling 1,200 tools were going to equip Éré in one go and would be distributed among the twelve districts of the village.

What a feast when the packed tools arrived in Éré! All these packages were carefully opened under the gaze of dozens of admirers. The funniest part was watching the big fingers of the elderly trying to screw the little nuts on the wheelbarrows. Joy and hope have replaced doubts.

It should be noted that, until 1972, there was not a single wheelbarrow in the village, and in one day each neighborhood was supplied with wheelbarrows and tools!

The big ceremony

D-Day came when the pastor of the “Church of God” led the great ceremony in the presence of all the inhabitants and with all the tools, under the “blue-yellow-red” Chadian flag. The village chief advised us to make good use of the equipment. We sang and prayed to close the ceremony; one could feel a great solemnity in these moments.

Would they succeed?

It was my intimate question. I had done my part and committed my reputation. What was going to happen now?

Two engineers from the Ministry of Public Works made a three-day visit to determine the route (design) of the dike by setting the levels to be respected to ensure the protection of the village.

All the work was going to be manual; each district would have a “length to build”. The discipline has been voluntarily accepted under the direction of the “dyke leaders”.

At that point, I seriously wondered (for a moment) if these people were going to be able to move around 20,000 cubic meters of the earth!

The first day of work

The first day of work saw an explosion of energy. Hundreds of women, men, and children came to build “their dike”.

At the sight of this enthusiastic crowd, all my doubts disappeared. Glory to God! My reputation was at stake because of the steps taken and the funding requested. Thanks to the goodwill of all, the project was crowned with success and widely known to the regional authorities.

The credit goes to the inhabitants themselves who built the dike for themselves and not ordered by others.

Lack of food

However, the granaries remained partially empty as the crop was badly damaged by excess water in the fields. Would the workers have enough food to be able to work on the dike, in addition to their usual tasks?

In N'Djamena, I had maintained contacts with another United Nations agency, the WFP (World Food Program).

"It is too far!"

Armed with my report and photographs, I met the representative who, after my presentation, said:

"We would be interested but 350 km is too far. Who will do the surveillance reports?" Immediately, I offered to monitor the progress since I was visiting this area every month. The dyke managers kept records of the work that I could use and summarize.

WFP provided a food ratio per working day to 1,200 workers. These are the usual activities of this organization. The distribution was made by the district under the supervision of each chief. Everything was recorded and shared with care. I have never heard of any dispute or problem. It was their dyke and we had to succeed.

Tools and food

So not only did the village have tools but also food. These supplies were delivered as the work progressed. Each time, a 12-ton WFP truck came down to the shore to unload. Éré being on the other side of the river, the village was only accessible by canoes. All these parcels of sardines, cereals, oil, corn, and milk were transhipped into canoes before they could reach the village. It was wonderful to see so much effort devoted to the good of all.

A well-regulated organization

All the inhabitants of the village had to go together on the dike two days a week and each district worked according to the same strategy. Some dug, others filled the wheelbarrows of the men and the buckets of the women; these formed a column and went on the dike to deposit the earth in the places indicated by a "chief". There, two or three men were spreading the earth, and volunteers tamping the soil with their feet to make it compact. On their return, the women composed songs and gave rhythm to the work, using their empty buckets as tambourines. These hymns and songs, often composed on a sustained rhythm, encouraged everyone. No one was allowed to stay in his house. "Inspectors" were responsible for ensuring that everyone was playing their part.

For weeks, the same scenario repeated itself ... and the sea wall took shape.



*Parents Girod, on their way to Éré,
along the Logone River*



The church in Éré

Chapter 8

A little further: Kim, Djoumane, Kolobo, Ham



The other villages were wondering how they too could get the same tools (I had not yet told them that I had asked for them on behalf of all the villages). Also, some people in Éré didn't want me to give others what they had received! I had to correct this publicly and show that if God had provided for one village, he could do it for others too.

Éré was the focal point for visitors from several agencies including WFP, and all were surprised at the success of the work that was being done, by hand and with enthusiasm, by both adults and the elderly, young and old of all ages.

The chiefs of the other four villages came in their capacity as an official delegation to get informed and see the progress of the work of the dike. Éré was honored and proud to have been chosen as a pilot for the other villages.

Soon after that, I was able to deliver tools and food aid to over 9,000 people for five villages.

In this time of scarcity, God turned the situation around so that these villages became places full of resources:

*“Happy are those who place their support in you!
They find ready-made paths in their hearts. When
they cross the Baca Valley, they turn it into a place
full of springs, and the rain also covers it with
blessings.”
(Psalm 84:4, 5)*

Everywhere songs and tambourines were heard. I was in charge of visiting the five sites and preparing the reports for the donors. During these visits, I was surrounded by the leaders and pastors of the different communities. It was an opportunity to get to know each other better and to preach that the Gospel is applicable in an everyday situation and not just for Sunday morning! Before that, this big village could have disappeared under the vagaries of nature, but by the vision of a man, the impossible had become a new reality, by the work of all for the same cause.

More than enough!

The work should have been completed during the first dry season in 1972-73, but we had to extend it over three seasons. Everyone, therefore, had time to reinforce the dike, fill the granaries, and repair the damage caused by the flood. During these three seasons, food was provided according to the number of working days, by WFP.

May all honor and glory be to God!

After Éré, Kim, Djoumane, Kolobo, and Ham, therefore, followed the same mode of organization. It was a beautiful demonstration when all the population, by mutual agreement, contributed



to the protection of their village. Christians could be powerful factors in development and progress if each wanted TO SERVE the OTHER as SERVING THE LORD, as the Gospel teaches. All of these villages have been models to follow.

During the following years, several groups of young people organized irrigation works to cultivate rice in the off-season. This very attractive initiative made it possible to obtain double harvests and also had the effect of settling the young people in the villages. In this time of scarcity, God turned the situation around so that these villages became places full of resources:

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Chapter 9

Mission, it's also ... When God uses the talents he has put into our lives



From the little dugout to the tin boat

It was an evening in Mailao, in the moonlight. Sitting under a tree on the riverbank, I suddenly had the idea of drawing a boat.

The villagers often had to cross the river to transport food or people, but the trees in Chad did not allow for the construction of large dugouts. The ones in the village were small and could only carry a few bags or only 4 or 5 people at a time. It was therefore necessary to make many trips each day.

Under this beautiful tree, without my having premeditated it, I was led to realize the drawing of a more spacious boat, with all the necessary dimensions for the construction. The inspiration had to be strong because everything was done in 2 hours! That evening, my former training as a designer



***Boat designed by André,
it carries 900 kilos***

*served me well. God uses everything in our lives!
From these plans, the craftsman of the village made two boats.
We equipped each boat with a 6CV engine.*

They have been used for a long time and on long distances.

It's also ...

Give to the one who asks you

A surprising miracle experienced with the pioneers

When we first met him, with his imposing stature and powerful voice, Laurent frightened everyone, especially the missionaries' wives and the priests. He had a very disturbed behavior. When someone saw him coming, he would close the doors to avoid confrontation because the man could be very threatening and violent. He had even lost an eye in a fight. The pub he opened was called "The Golden Calf".

In 1979, I was living in the capital and this man regularly came to my house to ask for salt or anything else. I never refused any of his requests: I always gave him what he asked for.

One day when we were having a meeting with three servants of God, including Rombada and Pierre, the man came to my house very angry. He was shaking the metal door to make as much noise as possible. None of us would open the door. Suddenly, I raised my voice like a trumpet and told him:

- Laurent, if you come here, we will cast out your demons!

- Yes, that's what I want.

Surprised but not hesitating, I opened the gate and ordered him to kneel there on the lawn, with the four servants of God standing

around him. Our prayers of supplication enveloped him. Then we took authority and ordered the demon to leave the man. We continued to proclaim the victory of Christ and thank God with songs. Suddenly, the man got up and left without a word to us!

On the way, someone invited him for a beer as usual, but he flatly refused. The next morning, he came back to my house. He was very calm: "André, why was I so bad?" he asked me.

To our great surprise and joy, Laurent became a devoted and active Christian brother. He began to distribute the gospel tracts we had in quantity. We entrusted him with these treasures with joy even though we were not completely sure of his new behavior. **But we were amazed a little more each day.**

Within two weeks, he visited the elementary school and other places to give out each of these tracts. The school principals, knowing the history of this man, were reluctant to give permission, but in the end, everything went well. There were no complaints, because his behavior had changed dramatically. What a transformation for this man who had been bound for so many years!

He later applied to attend a missionary Bible school. He was accepted, but because the subject of divine healing was controversial, he stood up one day, gave a speech, and left the class never to return.

Laurent was able to travel to France during the emergency evacuations following the 1980 coup. His testimony was well received. A dear Swiss pastor friend took care of him for a few weeks. Laurent testified to the churches and to anyone else who

would listen how Jesus Christ had changed his life. "When God starts a job, he finishes it to make it good." Then he lived in Paris where he attended physical therapy school and got married. Laurent often phoned my parents in Bourgoin, telling them each time: "André must return to France: life in Chad has become too dangerous." One day, he even made the trip to see my parents face to face.

Sometime later, I was able to visit him in the charming house he occupied with his wife and their two children. Together, we thanked the Lord for his wonders. Laurent felt loved by Christians and Christ was his reason for living.

Unfortunately, recurring health problems took their toll and we lost Laurent in a so-called minor operation.

*To God be the glory for this man who he brought out
of darkness into light.*

It's also ...

Strangers from afar knocking at your door

Richard and Nicole Sissia arrived at my home in early 1974. They tell it themselves:

On November 1, 1973, married for a year, we left for Africa. After having taken some time off work for six months, fitted out an old 403 to be able to sleep in it and transport the necessary things, we took the road without suspecting what was waiting for us... good and bad! The not so good part was obvious from the very first minutes: a series of various and increasingly serious breakdowns accompanied us and should have made us give up!

Twenty-three flat tires later, in the middle of the desert, waiting for a water pump that should take a month to arrive from France, all of a sudden, our interests changed: Nicole suddenly wanted to read the Gospel (which had never occurred to her until then) and Richard started to have only one word in his mind, which kept coming back: the name of André Girod, a man whose lecture he had heard six months earlier in the Catholic college where he was working.

Yet, until that very moment, the thought of going to see him had not occurred to him for a single second! We had gone to visit the Ivory Coast, to see the elephants and giraffes! However, Richard now had only one desire: to see the onion crop in Chad! But where could such a crazy idea come from?

It is necessary to go back up a thread that had been woven upstream ... by a very determined hand it seems!

In fact, it turns out that, in the training center where Richard worked, his boss had invited André Girod ... who had been recommended to him by a certain Nicolas, ... who was not content with selling car batteries but was happily spreading the Gospel to all those he met. This Nicolas had then proposed to his dear customer of director to introduce the missionary work to his young apprentices of all kinds...



Nicolas and his wife, Judith.

And that's how Richard crossed the path of this gentleman, saw a film about the culture of onions and other wonders and, ... once lost in the middle of the desert, had no other choice than to go and see it all on the spot! So, we changed our plans...

When we arrived after many adventures¹ in a hotel in Kouseri

(Cameroon), the managers strongly advised us against crossing the Chari to go to N'Djamena: 1. There is nothing to see in Chad, it is really not a tourist destination! 2. President Tombalbaye said on the radio this morning: "Go out into the streets and kill all the white people!" It was not very engaging, to say the least! Anyone would have turned back. However, we made the crossing, and even waited in town for two weeks because A. Girod was away. Richard: After two weeks, we knocked on his door, and he opened it, with his blue eyes! I still see him!

Nicole: He opened and let us in as if he had been waiting for us forever!

He welcomed us, listened to us, gave us shelter. *We stayed with him for at least two months. The conversations raised many questions: What is the new birth? Repentance? The baptism of the Spirit? etc. And each time, André did not give his own explanations, but opened the Bible. Strangely enough, for recalcitrant sixty-eighters, protesters of everything, these words had authority: what he read was true, period! Unimaginable! Was it because the previous months had exhausted us, neutralized us (!), but the Good Word was really THE word in our hearts!*

With André, every day counts. *He did not leave us idle in his living room; he showed us evangelization films that we never forgot, and he put us to work at the school in Bougoumène to replace two absent teachers.*

At that time, the context in the country was really difficult: the government's program provided for a return to the roots: every man between 20 and 50 years old who had not previously followed the ancestral rites was obliged to follow these initiation

rites, the yondo. Those who refused were exposed to terrible physical punishment and many pastors suffered physical, moral and spiritual pain. André therefore had to go back to the bush to support his pastors and Christians who had suffered greatly. In the midst of this immense distress, he might have been reluctant to offer hospitality and suggest that we leave... But this is not like the fervent “soul-winner” who had received us. Instead, he installed us in paradise: Mailao.

Hospitality in all its forms

He welcomed us not only in his house, but also in the mission, in everything that made up his life, and in a house that he particularly liked, that of Mailao. What confidence! He prepared his equipment, gave us literature, and left us in the company of a friendly janitor, the fish of the Chari, and the elephants that sometimes came through the magnificent garden at night!



During these two weeks, we read the two books that André had lent us. From the very first pages of Billy Graham’s “Peace with God”, Nicole began to cry her eyes out! Completely unaware of what was happening, Richard tried to comfort her: “No, you’re not that bad!” The conviction of sin followed its course with repentance and new birth. We didn’t understand it right away, but afterwards, the fruits were evident. Nicole would later say, “Since I’ve been reading the Bible, I don’t see things the way I used to! We have to let God do what he wants in our lives!”

Upon his return, André welcomed us to his home in N’Djamena for quite some time. We remember very well the great sobriety of

his interior (compared to the homes in France). It spoke to us of someone who has priorities other than the design and decoration of a home. His mind was not in these things, it was elsewhere...

We were able to go to church and discover the fervor of brothers and sisters who listen to a preaching with two translations, who dance to bring their offering! We experienced, each in turn, a miraculous healing, not spectacular, but very real.

A new start

We had to leave, put our things in a large trunk and board a pirogue to cross the Chari River, then the desert again by “truck-stop”. This is how we had come, this is how we were leaving, but we were not the same!

Epilogue

Later, much later, when we discovered how God works in lives, we understood that this trip had been initiated and led by the Lord, that he was with us in every adventure, for example when, after the passage to the Algerian/Niger border post, our radiator had finally given up the ghost:

We had very little water, the car was overheating and we didn't know if we had been told to drive 15 or 150 km to the Assamaka border post (Niger)... Not very reassuring! Richard having seen a very small black spot, far away on the horizon, we agreed to: 1. drink the juice of a pineapple can, so as not to die of thirst right away; 2. put the little water we had left in the radiator and drive towards this black spot, whatever it was!

Good choice! The little black spot was Assamaka. As we were checking our passports, the man in charge explained to us that some travelers who had come a little way with us and had

preceded us to the station had informed him that another car was due to arrive; therefore, since the beginning of our breakdown, he had been watching us with his huge binoculars and would have come to get us if we had not restarted!

What a wonderful image of the Lord who was watching over us during this whole journey, ready to intervene at any time, whatever the danger or the situation!

We saw this kindness in that man who welcomed us, even though he did not know us. We experienced it afterwards all our life and we still live it today, so much the grace of the Lord towards us seems present, real, infinite and is our most precious good.

Almost fifty years later, we still thank our God for having led us, and for having found a servant like André to lead us to Christ.

*A man's heart plans his way,
But the Lord directs his steps.
(Proverbs 16.9)*

Chapter 10

A very tried country – When everything changes



Natural disasters

This immense Sahelian country of Chad is frequently exposed to devastating natural disasters: drought, locust invasions, floods, and many more.

How to remain insensitive to these events? *The Church of God Mission has done its best to support thousands of people while teaching them to trust God in word and deed.*

The international community mobilized by sending aid. It is a whole population of expatriates coming from different countries, who brought multiple skills, both in the fields of relief and in the field of health. I would never have imagined such a deployment of resources to respond to the emergencies of populations fighting for life.

When everything changes - 1965-1990

In addition to natural disasters, Chad has also suffered from significant political unrest. It is not easy to summarize the great political events that we have known. The rivalry between North and South was from the outset the stumbling block causing too much suffering and misunderstanding. Chad has lost years of its development and youth.

By the grace of God, in all these dramatic years, we have always seen his protection and his help.

An imprisoned American pastor.

In February 1979, violent clashes broke out in N'Djamena. It was the start of the so-called Nine-Month War, and it was precisely on the first day of this war that the pastor of the Church of God, just arrived, was arrested on the road and taken hostage in the jails of Issène Habré. Fortunately, thanks to the assistance of the ICRC (International Red Cross), he was released four days later. The pastor and his family of five were repatriated to France and then to the United States. It was a tragic episode, but God rescued us.

*“The Lord will keep you. He does not sleep
or sleep whoever keeps you!”*

(Psalm 121.4)

The anguish of families

The 9 months' war pushed all the inhabitants of the southern regions (Sarh, Bongor...) to flee the capital and return to their native village, or to take refuge in Cameroon. The danger was permanent!

*In **March 1979**, we were able to help transport sixty “mothers” and their children to the South by truck, and the men by commercial vehicles.*

The following year some families returned to the capital to resume an almost normal life.

During this period, Mailao's house was no longer occupied. The new government requisitioned it to make it a training center for

rural youth. We have thus lost a site conducive to meetings and gatherings for our meetings and training.

Temporary departure...

The (security) instability of the situation in the country weighed heavily on the future of the missionary work of the Church of God. The exile of many Christian families meant that I was isolated in N'Djamena and I thought I had done most to help Christians.

After a long stay of three years in Chad, it was time for me to return to France. I wanted to give some news to all those who had contributed to this mission, but I also had to take stock and find my way. What was I going to do?

So, in June 1979, I took advantage of a lull in the country and went home on vacation, not knowing at this time that everything would change radically.

Conclusion

On a Mission, everything is not always easy! We may even be faced with tragic situations, and if we flee in such circumstances, who will believe in the compassion we preach?

On the contrary, during all these years, I have considered it rather a privilege to go through these difficulties with those whom the Lord has entrusted to me. I saw how God's blessing was with us, bringing comfort and hope.

God was certainly preparing me for another stage of my service and not just in Chad. By the grace of God, in all these dramatic years, we have always seen his protection and his help.

Part



THE GREAT
TRANSITION

Chapter 1

1981 – What to do now?



I have been asked one day:

- Mr. André Girod, you have become an official of the United Nations World Food Program. Why did you change your orientation? Why did you leave missionary to work in an organization like the WFP?

- There are certainly several reasons. In any case, I realized that everything was directed and facilitated by the Lord our God and that everything came to me without my imaginations it.

First of all, I had no intention of changing course after twenty years as co-founder of a well-established evangelical mission in Chad. The war and all sorts of trials temporarily interrupted my commitment. I was faced with the need for a change, but which one?

No resources

At the end of this period of my life, I found myself with no resources, no medical coverage and no retirement plan. I had some savings to pay for a trip back to France and I knew that my parents, worried, would welcome me with open arms. We were among the pioneers, those who live by faith, that is to say, relying solely on God!

No offer in Christian service

In June 1979, I went to Europe to take stock. I had decided this: “To the first person who invited me to work, I will say yes!” It was my fleece¹ before the Lord! *Neither the Missions nor the friends and pastors that I met in France then offered me*

1 As Gedeon in Judges 6.36-40.

anything. One of them, however, very kindly suggested that "If I really couldn't find a solution, I could join their ministry and they would find me a place!" I understood these reactions, but I was left alone with my questions, without frustration or bitterness. Besides, the idea of staying in France did not resonate with my heart. There was still so much to do in Chad!

I understood and accepted that there was nothing for me, after these twenty years in the service of the Christian Mission in Chad.

However, I knew that I was valuable to God. In that silence, I shouted, "Lord, I'm worth over a hundred thousand dollars, you will take care of me, I belong to you!" No one heard my voice down here, but higher certainly, I was heard!

A proposal from afar

While in France, I was invited to participate in a week-long seminar in Senegal, and on my return I found a telegram from WFP headquarters in Rome. I immediately called the number indicated: it was very clearly a proposal to work with them, starting with Chad! What a huge surprise!

The question was simple: "When can you come to Rome?" Yes, I was of value to them! It was a Tuesday; I did not hesitate to propose my visit for the following Tuesday. From then on, a new direction for my life began. I had laid down this fleece: "Towards the first one who calls me, I will go", but I never imagined that one day I would be an international official at the United Nations, and yet!

"And yet", this expression reminded me of a meeting with a former teacher. When I was eleven, he discouraged me from continuing my studies in high school! Many years later, in a friendly conversation, he admired my professional pathways and exclaimed: "My dear André, who would have believed it?

And yet!”

God does wonders in our lives and so it was for me.

This new opportunity raised a question in me: “Will I be up to the interviews and the responsibilities required?” However, I left as a winner who wanted to grab the prize. I was confident and without any fear.

In Rome with just a missionary CV!

The welcome was very warm. Then began the interview, in the presence of several officials. I only had my missionary CV to present! Mr. J. P. Nastorg, the Director for West Africa, was very gracious and spoke to me as if we already knew each other.

A few hours later, he told me that my application was accepted and that I had to complete the formalities in the office downstairs.

However, I was surprised at such ease that brought me into this great organization. God had done what was necessary: I later learned that the previous WFP representative in Chad, Mr. J. Noblet, had made recommendations about me long before his final departure. Indeed, we had had several contacts and he knew our work at the Mission. Mr. Nastorg, this insightful and highly skilled man, briefly explained to me what was expected of me. On the spot, I signed, according to the procedure, a six-month contract.

In the attributions and responsibilities, the Director also informed me that as Head of Agency I would be on the list of diplomatic personnel to the government. As such, I would be obliged to represent the WFP and to attend meetings requested by the government. He added: “André, you will also have all the benefits associated with the status of members of the Diplomatic Corps.” It was too much at once!

Change of direction

Two days later, Mr. Nastorg called me and informed me that N'Djamena airport had been closed due to another coup d'état instigated by Goukouni Weddeye. I was redirected to Cameroon to open an office in Garoua, the big city in the North, and take care of projects while waiting for better days! This time in Cameroon allowed me to familiarize myself with WFP's activities and its management. In Garoua, I found several dozen internationals from different agencies. They had all been evacuated from N'Djamena and taken refuge there. I was one of them, but at least I had a schedule of visits to the area.

Return to N'Djamena

Calm returned to N'Djamena and the new government of Weddeye guaranteed security. Life was slowly resuming its course. Somehow, we recovered files and some goods from the old offices, but everything had been visited and ransacked.

1982. I was well established in my new function. Food distributions had resumed thanks to new arrivals from various donor countries, via Port-Harcourt in Nigeria. I had to participate in many meetings organized by the government bringing together donors, to better organize responses to emergency needs. I represented WFP and had to report to the best of my ability in Rome. It was the era of telexes, not the Internet.

It would be difficult to explain all the logistical feats that had to be achieved, in particular, to cross the Chari River with two ferries, not at all suitable for huge trucks, and in front of the abundance of arrivals, it was also necessary to requisition warehouses. Every day I realized that I received inspiration to take useful initiatives. The results were positive and always appreciated.

I worked in Chad for four years for the WFP while the United Nations regulations normally provide for stays of two years maximum, given the country's difficulties. It was my trial by fire!

Despite the success, my new job did not fully satisfy me.

A fresh look at my new job

Long before I left Chad, Evangelist Rombada visited me at home. Then during the conversation, I told him. "You know Rombada, I have everything I need to live and work, I know a lot of people here. I speak with directors and also with the Minister, but I do not have the same joys and satisfactions as when I was in the Mission!" Tit for tat, Rombada answers me: "But Mr. André, you are the Joseph of Chad like Joseph in Egypt!²" Surprised by this spontaneous response, I then showed him my pass. He read my full name aloud: "André-Joseph Girod". No one knew the middle name my parents gave me. Together, we prayed as if to take on this new mission: to feed grieving multitudes.

Rombada was not wrong, as I oversaw all food shipments to the most remote places up to nine hundred kilometers. I signed the slips of dozens of trucks that left each day. At that time, it was the largest WFP operation in the world. Since then, there have been more huge ones!

The office grew with three other officials including an American supervisor, but I remained the "head of operations". We had a six-seater plane to go into the field to follow the distributions with the local authorities. This is how I was able to visit the most difficult to reach regions of the North and East.

I took full advantage of these trips, which were very different from the activities of the office. It was in Chad that I obtained my private pilot license and have used it in different circumstances! We were close to the beneficiaries and amid their distress.

2

See Genesis 41.

My life of active service can therefore be summed up as follows:

- **Twenty years as missionary “André”**, a disciple of Jesus to proclaim Christ.

- *Twenty years as “Joseph”, to manage food aid to multitudes of afflicted families and refugees, fleeing the war, in search of more lenient places.*

I discovered from my youth that it was never difficult to make decisions: each step revealed a path marked out in advance in which I had to walk. I just had to be available.

“You will hear a voice behind you saying to you, this is the way, walk in it.”

(Isaiah 30.21)

I have never regretted my decisions, much less the decision to take “Miss Rose” for my wife.

Chapter 2

From Ghana to Benin via Laos



Arrival in Ghana

I quickly adopted this country, so different from the countries of the Sahel, because of the humid climate and the English language. I was made to feel welcome at the office and quickly got to know the staff. The WFP Representative in charge of the office was a very experienced Englishman at WFP and a Protestant.

My stay aimed to improve my English. A teacher came to the office two hours a day and I also had taken a tutor at home. I hadn't spoken French for several months and I missed it. One day, my tutor asks me: "Would you like to meet someone who is studying French at the Language Institute in Accra?" My response was immediate and positive. She was a charming young girl who spoke French beautifully. We have become friends. I also hung out with his family because we were close neighbors.

After a few months, the course being over, I was transferred to Benin, a country not far from Ghana. Following a letter I had sent them, my friend Rose's parents allowed her to visit me for a few days, and then she was hired as an executive secretary in the UNICEF office.

But suddenly, I was appointed for an Emergency Mission of a few months in Laos, South Asia.

Laos

In Laos, everything was very different, but I liked the country as well as the work at the WFP office in Vientiane, the capital. I was comfortable because people spoke French and English. The country's problem was that the drought had reached the northern regions beyond the mountains. From east to west, food shortages were being felt badly.

In relationships, I have learned to conform to habits, very gently, including with the Government. After two months of a long wait, the first trucks of rice arrived from neighboring Thailand. From Vientiane, it was then necessary to transship the foodstuffs, on small 4x4 trucks of 5 to 6 tons, to cross the mountains on winding roads. A work of titans!

It took four to five months to get the food to the distribution sites. Then came the time when we asked the Government to visit the North and meet beneficiaries there. Again, I saw the hand of the Lord, for everything seemed impossible. Finally, the Government chartered a 14-seater military helicopter and we were able to make several stopovers over three days. It was an extraordinary, very positive experience. I have known deep Laos, the Laos of forests.

A very rare privilege at that time for foreigners. We were five representatives of the United Nations and five members of the Government, including a representative of Foreign Affairs. This unique trip strengthened our relationship with the Officials. Where we went, we could see empty or broken bags in the small houses of the inhabitants.

Africa seemed far away to me. I tried to maintain a simply friendly correspondence with "Miss Rose". However, shortly before I returned to Africa after eight months, I kept thinking to her. So, one night, I found myself writing the letter of my life: a

marriage proposal! The response was immediate, telegraphed to the office. The secretary, very happy, brought me the news; she was waiting to see my reaction... Yes, I was happy, but how will it be?

The end of the stay in Vientiane was a succession of very official and at the same time quite convivial receptions, in the presence of one or even two ministers. Everyone expressed the wish to see this period of WFP in Laos extended.

Return to Benin

A quick stint of a few days at Headquarters in Rome enabled me to meet the senior officials. They thanked me for leading this very special Mission. They had received positive information from the Embassy of the United States and the Embassy of France, both based in Laos. So I had nothing to add, the terms were laudatory; it was another grace from the Lord for me, the man with the missionary CV!

Long live the bride!

Encouraged by dear German and American friends in Benin, we got married at the Town Hall of a constituency in Cotonou. Everything was simple; we were surrounded by our best friends. In the evening, we offered a cocktail in a large hotel in the city center, in a friendly atmosphere, with the participation of a church choir who spontaneously joined us; which added to the feeling of a "warm welcome".

Then we celebrated our religious wedding in Ghana, with all of my wife's family and their friends. Everything was simple and true. My partner and I then flew to France to visit my parents. It was the dead of winter, the least welcoming time for my dear wife! I remember my father, so proud to introduce his daughter-in-law to friends. This comforted me, as a mixed marriage was not so common at the time, and more easily accepted in Africa

than in France.

At the same time, the Mayor of the city of Bourgoin-Jallieu inaugurated a special ceremony to congratulate and honor the Berjallians who had worked for the influence of the city. To my amazement, I found out that I was nominated. This is how, like others, I received the medal of "Citizen Ambassador of Bourgoin-Jallieu." The Dauphiné Libéré echoed this:

[...] André Girod [...] made a small stopover in Bourgoin-Jallieu, his hometown, which has never forgotten him. Taking advantage of his visit, the mayor M. OUDOT recently awarded him the city's medal of honor. The Ambassador of North Isère, the itinerant Pastor, will go under other abandoned skies, this same joy in his heart.

We don't know if Pastor Girod has been successful in his life, that's not his problem. He thinks so much of others.

J. C. SERRE, journalist, The Dauphiné Libéré - January 1989

Installation in Benin

My wife and I were settled, we had jobs and a good circle of friends among ex-pats. For my part, I mostly frequented the Aero-Club where I did exercises in my spare time.

One day, I even took my beloved to Natitingou and Parakou (two towns further north) to visit our storage stores and meet the management staff.

I have to say that on the way back we were not very reassured when our small plane got caught in the fog and the rain. My passenger squeezed my arm, and fortunately, the landing in Cotonou put an end to our feat, to our great relief!

Chapter 3

The children of Sao Tome and the refugees from Bukavu



A transfer after three years

This time we were leaving for Sao Tome and Principe, an archipelago, located in the Gulf of Guinea, on the equator.

In Sao Tome, we had our best adventures: For example, my wife had to go in the morning in search of fish for the meal; you had to get supplies from a local fishing boat, or coming from Gabon! She was accompanied by a Christian friend from the Congo, whose husband worked at the island's electricity company. They formed a team and did well in their mission, to the great satisfaction of the husbands.

We had times of scarcity, but we accepted them with optimism because there was still a solution. Over time, everything has improved a lot on the island, life has become more pleasant. My wife was quickly able to communicate in Portuguese, while for my part, I spoke French with the personalities I met in my work.

The WFP had set up a huge project whose goal was to cover the complete renewal of the plantation of cocoa trees (a cocoa tree produces between fifteen and twenty years, after which, it is necessary to plant others by choosing quality seeds.).

The organization provided a family ration for the workers of about 15 cocoa plantation companies, the "Empresas de Cacao",

the largest of which had 40,000 workers. WFP thus distributed hundreds of tons of food each month, which children in canteens and nurseries could benefit from.

Also, the “Empresas de Cacao” took a small contribution from the wages of the workers to constitute an aid fund. This money was systematically reinvested and this is how several workers’ housing and school canteens were built or improved. This WFP’s program was very popular.

Beautiful Christian encounters

The majority of the inhabitants were of the Catholic religion. There was also a so-called Protestant church, long-established by a Swedish Mission. We had a beautiful fellowship with these friends; the pastor was a very welcoming and always optimistic man and it was good because the atmosphere on the island was often monotonous.

Four years instead of two

This WFP project was considered by Headquarters to be very difficult to manage. The recommended stay was reduced to one or two years, maximum. We stayed there for four years, with complete confidence.

Surprise before leaving

Two weeks before our final departure, the First Lady rushes into my office one morning:

- Mr. Girod I hear that you have to leave very soon?*
- Yes madam, we are assigned to Congo Brazzaville.*
- Listen, tell me quickly when you are free because the President insists on having you at the Palace, with your wife, for a convivial meal!*

What a shock! It was still a wish I had expressed a few weeks earlier. Yes, I wanted to visit the Palace, a jewel of Portuguese architecture. I didn’t think I could put it so well.

Indeed, this meal with the President and the First Lady took place. My wife and I freely exchanged our appreciations over our four-year stay. The meal continued, then when it was time to retire, President Trovoada got up from the table and asked:

- Have you ever visited the Palace?

- No never, Excellency!

So, it was he who led us by commenting on the beauty of the hangings, furniture, and architecture. Everything had been restored as it was originally, during the Portuguese presence. When we walked into the President's beautiful office, I dared to suggest:

- Excellency, this is where you need inspiration and prayer to make decisions!

He nodded:

- Yes, because it's not always easy!

Our visit ended, we reached our home, on the edge of the city harbor. Our mission in Sao Tome was coming to an end.



Official visit to a school with Rose

Precious Christian fellowship in Congo Brazzaville

Everywhere we went we had good social relations, with ex-pats from different countries and of course with the locals. What we lacked somewhat was to find Christians. In Brazzaville, we were delighted and we again thank everyone for the warm welcome we received and the friendship we have shared.

The WFP project in the country was working well, it was a well-oiled routine. However, it was necessary to ensure that the food products reached the designated beneficiaries. We had to visit the storage sites every month and carry out inventories with local officials. So this part of my job was not very captivating because my role was mainly administrative. Besides, the Government frequently organized meetings with donors from different agencies and I had to attend these meetings, to maintain good diplomatic relations.

One Sunday morning, I went to the landing stage at the border with the city of Kinshasa to welcome a colleague from WFP. On the way back, I noticed people walking into a movie theater, book in hand! Intrigued, I stopped near these people and my hunches were found to be confirmed: it was an evangelical church. I have jotted down all the relevant information to come back sooner or later!

It didn't take long because the following Sunday, my wife and I attended the service and were well received. We have become temporary members of this assembly and very close friends of the pastor, Constant Mampouya, the founder of the Community.

Remember the prisoners

In Brazzaville, I never mentioned my past as a missionary in Chad to respect United Nations guidelines: officials must be "apolitical and areligious". But one Sunday, when we had been there for four or five months, Pastor Mampouya sent a delegate to tell me that he would like me to preach in the church. Once again, my surprise was great because he did not know my past! That Sunday, before an assembly of about 900 people, I chose as my Bible text the last chapter of Hebrews, verses 1 to 3.

"Persevere in brotherly love. Practice hospitality. Remember the prisoners as if you were also prisoners, those who are mistreated as also being yourselves in a body." Then in the introduction, I replaced the term "prisoners" with "refugees". I expressed

that in the Great Lakes sub-region, there were over a million refugees who had fled Rwanda to neighboring countries. I tried to show how life can turn around in moments and asked how we Christians can help them.

Many times, God uses us to answer our prayers:

I assure you, it is true, the next morning I received a long telex addressed to me personally; it came from the WFP office and detailed my new assignment. I was appointed “head of operations” for an Emergency Mission in eastern DRC to take care of 350,000 refugees in the town of Bukavu. All the details were provided. I had to leave as soon as possible.

I had been taken at my word! This is the humor of God.

I cried out to the Lord to help me and enable me to carry out this mission.

I had to leave my wife in Brazzaville and only come back for a weekend every two weeks. My partner was not at church that morning, so she hadn’t heard my words.

For her part, she was experiencing a great grace from God: A neighboring elementary school had made nine classes available to the church to teach children on Sundays. A few people in the church were trained by a Swiss delegate from the League for Bible reading. For many of these children, their parents did not attend church; they came because they were attracted to their friends. These dedicated teachers have earned everyone’s trust and instilled faith in nearly 600 children aged 6 to 16.

We were impressed by the wisdom of some children who were able to summarize the Bible teaching so clearly and by some prayers of the little ones. One could speak of a revival among them. It was a good preparation before the political troubles and insecurity that were about to unfold in the country.

When we left the Congo, the country was going through major turmoil, to the point that my family had to be evacuated to France. I stayed to run the office and a few months later we were about to leave the country for good.

The friends of the church wanted to have a party. They were able to dispose of the officers' mess and organize a small meal with testimonials, thanks, and gifts. Even today, we are still in contact with those friends to whom we have remained attached.



Two months after our departure, a civil war broke out and many families in the South had to take refuge in the forests, feeding on leaves and roots for more than a year. It was later learned that the children continued to testify valiantly for the Lord.

Bukavu (DRC)

Arrived in Goma, the border town with Rwanda, and 1,500 km from Kinshasa, I saw refugees in great distress arriving like a river; they joined a space that served as a camp where no less than 700,000 people were registered.

From there I had to take another flight to Bukavu.

We were able to train a well-qualified team on site. Together we faced enormous logistical difficulties, both in finding storage space and in renting small vehicles for redistribution.

WFP delivered food every week to all the groups scattered in the hills around Bukavu. All the best places to pitch a plastic canvas tent were occupied.

A fascinating sight

From the start of my mission, I sought to maintain excellent collaboration with UNHCR¹. It was appreciated and the collaboration was beneficial for all. WFP used around twenty small vehicles adapted to small roads to reach the groups. I have done the circuit several times. I admired the exceptional landscape and especially the joy of the kids, playing ball and shouting when we arrived.

It was like a reward for all the efforts made, both by the dedicated staff and by the donor countries. Imagine that the food arrived at us by trucks of thirty tons, from Mombassa, the big port of Kenya. These products were supplied by Australia, Japan, Europe, and the USA.

What was remarkable was the seriousness of the refugees who were keen to deliver fair rations per family.

When everything was going well, the rations consisted of oil, grains, canned fish or meat, and even salt. Each camp had its management system, with its supervisors. We didn't have to step in to settle disputes. The only problem was to secure the foodstuffs against theft.

Baptisms amid destitution

Two men came to the office one day and asked to meet with me, which was not frequent! They were introduced and told me that they were Rwandan pastors who had taken refuge on a nearby hill: "We know that you are a believer! We come to thank you because we regularly receive food rations from WFP. It hasn't always been that way," they added. Then after a few moments, they invited me to a baptismal service in a Congolese church. Since it was on Sunday, I was able to accept. It was touching: all these wounded families were singing and expressing hope.

1

UNHCR: United Nations Refugee Agency.

The pastor showed me his place of residence: “You see, I have a few square meters of protection with my wife and three children under this plastic tent. Before, I had a car, a house, church members; now I have nothing but the Lord! I gave a few words of encouragement; I honestly couldn’t identify with them, but I felt their pain. Then we parted ways.

This testimony is dramatic and is repeated millions of times, because of the “governments of men”, but soon the new Kingdom of Peace will come on earth. It is the hope of Christians.

Bibles for Bukavu

Sometime later, my wife and I were in France, in a large church in Mulhouse where we recounted our journeys. The senior pastor gave us several dozen Bibles that we sent to Bukavu free of charge by the Christian Service of the MAF (Mission Aviation fellowship).



Bukavu: one of the 150 refugee camps.



*A special tent for
children without parents*

*Trucks ready to load for the camps. Each
truck was dedicated to a camp.*

*Each group sent 4 or 5 people per truck to
load and count the bags, accompany the
transport and unload the whole thing at
their camp.*



*The distribution was done following
strict rules that were generally well
respected.*

Chapter 4

Last assignment



At Headquarters, I was an accomplished, steadfast civil servant who had served in a wide variety of situations, and I had to change countries for the last time. The right choice was limited: we dreamed of going to the Ivory Coast. Several candidates applied, so I saw my wife start praying like a fighter and she was assured that we would go to Ivory Coast. It took a while to see the outcome of what we wanted, but our desire was granted. However, we had taken no steps to activate the decision.

Ivory Coast

Yes, the news was confirmed, we were going to Ivory Coast. God be praised! Our entire move arrived in Abidjan by plane from Brazzaville, including the small Clio car. How easy it was. Without interruption, I was able to resume work in the Abidjan office. Everything was to be discovered and relationships to be rebuilt. I was new and being watched.

This office covered Sierra Leone and Liberia. I was in charge of Ivory Coast and its projects, with 300,000 refugees from Liberia, along the border, then of a large school canteen program in Ivory Coast for 200,000 children, jointly managed with a National Office.

How many primary schools have I visited? The contact was easy, I encouraged the cooks to respect hygiene and food protection. Also, we were able to provide garden tools to create vegetable gardens. It was the right time.

Faced with the immensity of the needs, WFP had fewer resources. It had to make drastic cuts to its programs to respond to other urgent situations. We were responsible for spreading the message and modifying current projects.

The Regional Office was headed by an American colleague with whom the understanding was very cordial. He traveled a lot; he was an energetic man, always positive and dedicated to WFP. Our relations with the government have always been cordial as well. Our stay in Ivory Coast gave us a lot of satisfaction.

In 1999, my official retirement day was confirmed, exactly July 24. We left Abidjan for a few months in France. Following this, we could return to the country in a private capacity. This is what we have chosen.

Definitely for new adventures!projects.

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Definitely for new adventures!



Set of dispensaries and structures for emergency care.



It is not advised to come so close to a female gorilla with her baby! Fortunately, she passed in front of me in all tranquility.



*Weekly meeting with the different NGO teams
to inform them of the rations available for distribution.*



Interview on the local radio



Chapter 5

Back to my first vocation



My first steps in the service of God in 61 in Fort-Lamy consisted in preaching in the street. I could have sold anything, that was my thing. I had that in my blood. I didn't hesitate to sit at a crossroads, with or without a microphone. The results were encouraging as we saw some nice conversions, but these fruits were still minimal.

In 1963, we had the Osborn couple in Fort-Lamy. What a privilege to meet these servants of the Gospel! These missionaries were able to go anywhere and adapt to any place. When we welcomed them, the temperature in the house must have reached almost 38 to 40 degrees Celsius; they put up with it all, with a simple ceiling fan.

Their whole life was dedicated to public evangelism "out of the sanctuaries".

I had only seen a mass campaign once, and that was in Bogota, Colombia. This experience only accentuated my desire to set up such meetings in French-speaking countries which were a little neglected by the big ministries. I kept my wish secret for a long time, reserving myself to express it at the right time ...

In Abidjan, something was quietly preparing.

In 1999, I retired from the UN. After a few months spent in France, my wife and I returned to live in Abidjan.

We could see that Christians were open for evangelism, but a grand campaign project needed all denominations, and therefore the leaders. With the help of two pastors, we met with different leaders and suggested starting a big campaign with Dr. T. L. Osborn. His work was well known all over Africa, but he had never been to Ivory Coast before; so it was a general surprise. But I knew T. L. Osborn liked to go places he had never been before.

After about a year of preparation and outreach, the “Organizing Committee” made up of leaders from several denominations, expressly sent a letter of invitation to T. L. Osborn.

Confirmation took a bit of time to come, but when it reached us, it contained a breathtaking request: I also had to suggest four other French-speaking countries!

The dates and details of the conditions were clearly explained. So within a few weeks, I became a facilitator for the Osborn ministry in French-speaking countries. It was more than I expected. It was a return to my first call. What I had not been able to accomplish in one country, a 82-year-old master was going to accomplish in several nations. I was just a discreet link in the chain.

I was so grateful to God for giving this opportunity to thousands of Christians and non-Christians to discover the power of the Gospel today, and to believe in salvation in Jesus Christ by giving one’s life to serve God. alive and true.

Which countries have organized these large public meetings?

- Congo DRC, in the huge metropolis Kinshasa.*
- Congo Brazzaville, small in number of inhabitants but chosen by God to radiate faith in Jesus Christ.*
- Gabon, in the capital, Libreville.*
- The Country of Ivory Coast, in the city of Abidjan, where we lived.*

Then, by a combination of circumstances, a group of assemblies in Paris joined together to organize a public campaign in the Paris region. I had to meet with officials in France to confirm preparations and give approval to the Tulsa office.

Except for the DRC, this was T. L. Osborn's first visit to these nations.

We had there, the five French-speaking countries, and lastly, Togo, a neighbor of Ghana, was added.

"Key men" appeared in each country to prepare for these events and they surrounded themselves with volunteers to motivate the churches and form Organizing Committees. These Committees coped with magnificently all the challenges that had to be met for all the conditions essential to the success of the project to be met.

In each country, everything worked perfectly until the end of the events.

We later learned that the presidents of these nations had occasionally contributed by providing large public spaces, such as a large auditorium or a stadium.

"The good hand of our God was on each of them."

Training before the Campaign

It all started with a series of seven teachings, given in the three to four days leading up to the Campaign proper. These meetings were for Christians who wanted to become “soul winners.”

The word miracle was the canvas of the message, like an acrostic poem. M for Jesus our model to imitate, I for inspiration, R for response, A for action, etc.

The key verse developed was from Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1, verse 1:

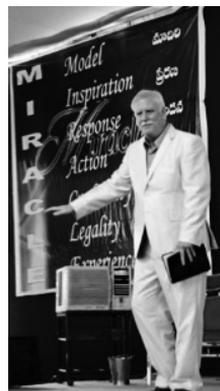
“Everything that Jesus began to do and teach.” The resulting declaration of faith was, “Jesus, you have opened the way for me to a personal knowledge of God. You have risen and you have sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in me. Now the ministry you began continues through me.”

At the end of the 4th day, the public meeting began: No music or dancing, just a song before the message which was usually about the story of a miracle of Jesus, and lasted forty to fifty minutes at most. There followed the invitation to prayer for all those who wanted to receive Jesus in their life. Then came a collective prayer for physical healing. Words of thanks and praise from the crowd with loud hallelujahs closed this moment.

Then, the preacher encouraged the audience: “Start doing what you couldn’t do before. If you’re healed, come to the platform.” This is how a long line of energetic people could be seen forming, eager to witness their miracle.

We have seen amazing things.

We could write pages about the many moving accounts of these new believers. The door of Heaven is open to those who believe. After the departure of the servant of God, believers, churches, and communities were reinvigorated in the faith; all could “continue to do and teach what they had seen and heard.”



Brazzaville

Report of the coordinator in Brazzaville, Pastor Constant Mampouya:

“This conference led by Dr. T. L. Osborn, was held almost two years after the end of the last civil war in Congo, a war which had caused a deep tear in the social fabric between the inhabitants of different ethnic groups, those of the North and those in the south of the city of Brazzaville: people no longer saw each other.

This seminar was held in the southernmost Protestant parish of the city, and it turned out that this conference served to fill this gap: the southern districts were again frequented by the populations of the North. It was already a great success, so much so that during these three days of the seminar, we registered an attendance of 5,000 to 6,000 people morning and evening.

We were forced to organize these meetings in the open air because no room in Brazzaville was able to contain this large audience. The First Lady of the Republic was invited to the seminar and she attended it every day, from the beginning to the end of the teachings.

Then the Great Campaign took place at Boulevard des Armées, on the city’s largest esplanade, where major official events usually take place. The event brought together 70 to 80,000 participants. Never has a campaign brought together so many persons in Congo, and this every day. We have recorded countless miracles with moving testimonies.”

Testimonial from a bookseller, Mr. Rufin

“It can be said without a doubt that February 2002 was a historic month for evangelization in the Congo. Indeed, the Congo had the grace to welcome the one who was one of the great servants of God of his time, the American evangelist Dr. T. L. Osborn, who died in 2013. This visit to the Congo was initiated by the missionary André Girod who has worked a lot for the Lord in Africa and currently resides in Ghana with his family.

This evangelization was held on the one hand, in the south of the city, on the grounds of the evangelical church of Matour and, although far from the city, this seminar gathered around 5,000 people and took place outside. It was also followed by large gatherings over five days, on the huge downtown plaza.

A royal donation

The Osborn Foundation donated 30,000 books to Christians in the Congo containing the evangelist’s practical teachings. The seminar participants all received three or four different books of edification.

Donation to the University of Brazzaville, Congo.

Also, a Campaign commission had the honor of handing over to Marien Ngouabi University the Encyclopedia of Osborn Ministry in the World.

These illustrated testimonies show that God is still working today. These thousands of pages that anyone can consult, tell the story of more than sixty years of service to the Osborn couple.

The conference and the Brazzaville Campaign were a success. All the Christian assemblies, whether they are the Revival Assemblies, Catholic or Pentecostal churches, have come together from all over the Congo.

Dr. Osborn received full honors from officials and great gratitude from pastors. His passage greatly sparked a renewal of faith in the country.”



Doctor T. L. Osborn receives a thank you gift from an official

Abidjan, Ivory Coast. February 2002

The Organizing Committee was particularly active. Everything was grandiose because the pastors were anticipating a great campaign.

T. L. Osborn arrived at the airport after a long journey, with two stopovers. He was greeted in the VIP lounge reserved for the occasion. Several journalists bombarded him with questions which he tried to answer.

Impressive numbers.

The seminar took place at the Marcory Stadium. As soon as the doors opened, a crowd moved into the lawn area where neatly lined up chairs waited. In the morning sessions, we could count up to 8,000 people. In the evening, the number could double to reach from 15 to 16,000, because of the presence of all those who were available after their working day. This crowd carefully followed the teachings of the man of God. To everyone's surprise, the preacher went the extra mile because he spoke French during all these sessions. It was wonderful.

No word fell to the ground, everything was recorded in video and audio for the happiness of those who, far away, could not be in

this temple of the Gospel.

Seven intensive teaching sessions followed one another. Each day a leaflet summarizing the lesson was distributed to the participants. It was thanks to the number of leaflets submitted that we could have an estimate of the number of people present.

The countryside in Yopougon

The Baptist Mission “works and missions” of Pastor R. Dion, made available a large area on which the Organizing Committee was able to install a podium, lighting, and a sound system capable of covering the entire space.

On the first night, a crowd gathered near the podium, and in no time, it filled the entire pitch.

T. L. Osborn, as usual, preached about a miracle of Jesus. It was the paralytic who had come down through the roof. In his message, he said: “If Jesus carried your suffering, illness, or disability to the cross, you no longer have to carry them yourself!” From that moment, we began to see crutches brandished in the middle of the crowd as well as a wheelchair, but the preacher exclaimed: “Wait, I have not finished my sermon”, and immediately calm returned.

Everything was successful; remarkable healings stunned people, for example, these two students who had been accompanied to the meeting by being bound by chains because they were “out of meaning”. They were miraculously delivered and came to cry at the feet of the preacher, totally released.

It would take too long to tell everything; What is certain is that there was great joy in these gatherings and that a beautiful unity was felt among all the listeners.

The Osborn Foundation donated 60,000 books to Christians in Ivory Coast containing all the teachings preached by the Osborns. Five titles were available and everything was distributed during the seminar and beyond.

After the joy and the blessings, the trial

The politico-military crisis in the Ivory Coast or the Ivorian civil war began on September 19, 2002, seven months after the Campaign. The country has deplored many victims and endured great suffering. War is never good, it has separated ethnic groups and regions for reasons of supremacy from one camp to the other. These events lasted 4 years and 5 months and only ended with the Ouagadougou agreements on March 4, 2007.

It was during this dangerous time for foreigners that my wife and I loaded our car and drove the 600 kilometers to Ghana. Our temporary mission in Ivory Coast was over.

Seminar and Campaign in Paris - France

In Montreuil, the large 4,500-seat auditorium was packed, morning and evening to host the Seminar. Everyone after these days was prepared for the demonstration of the Gospel in the outdoor meetings that were to follow.

The Home Office has granted three days out of the five requested. The designated place was the large esplanade in front of the Château de Vincennes, very accessible by the RER line N ° 1.

During the three afternoons, a very attentive compact crowd listened to the message which seemed ordinary since without spectacular emphasis! However, upon the invitation to prayer to accept Christ, there was a stir among this crowd, the number of which was difficult to estimate. Many, many people raised their hands; they had certainly never heard this good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Prayer for the sick followed. I was in the crowd twenty or thirty yards from the podium. I saw a visually handicapped lady who said she could see much better and made her way to the platform to testify. I have seen other people jumping or bending forward

to “test their healing” from various disabilities. A little girl of four or five, right next to me, was trying her first steps. As always in his campaigns, T. L. Osborn took the time to gather testimonies, which builds confidence and faith in the other participants.

Many echoes circulated in town

A Parisian pastor recently mentioned that he had at the time made all the trips to see and hear “this man who worked miracles at the Château de Vincennes and who was talked about in the press and even in the metro”.

Curiosity was aroused, which allowed believers to say more.

We all regretted that these meetings at the end of August 2002 lasted only three days and not five as initially desired.

These glorious encounters revived in all listeners the certainty that God is alive in Jesus Christ.

*JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY
TODAY AND FOREVER.*

(Hebrews 13.8)

The 60,000 books also continued to testify, wherever they could penetrate.

As a conclusion

Do not regret reading these stories. We are in 2021, these big gatherings will not happen again anytime soon! Maybe they will never even happen again. We must know and fully understand that they have existed for the benefit of the spread of the Gospel.

Many people let us know that they would like to see and hear these servants of God today, but most of them have left us for the heavenly homeland.

Now is the time to act!

The present time is different, we must remember what we have learned from the experience of the elders. It is therefore up to us to take up the challenge expressed here:

***“CONTINUE TO DO and TEACH
WHAT JESUS
BEGAN TO DO and TEACH.”
WE ARE ITS IMITATORS.***

ABIDJAN

Seminar in Marcory





Consecration prayer



ABIDJAN

Campaign in Yopougon





Teaching books will be distributed to each participant



PARIS

Seminar in Montreuil



*Seminar at Montreuil
(4500 people in attendance)*



PARIS



*Campaign at Château de Vincennes
(Pictures was given by Dr. T. L. OSBORN)*



PRAYER

THE LORD IS near you right now. Before you put this book down, if you have not yet accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, find a quiet place where you can pray to God without being disturbed. Kneel down and say this prayer out loud:

DEAR LORD, I receive the gift of eternal life today. I acknowledge that I have sinned against you and that my sins have separated me from you and your blessings. I sincerely regret them and ask for your forgiveness.

I believe that Jesus Christ died for me, in my place, and that he rose again to live in my life as my Savior.

Now I accept you and you save me from sin, hell and all the power of evil. I accept Christ as my Lord.

Jesus, you said that if I came to you, you would not reject me. I come to you seeking salvation and trusting only in your blood. I know that you do not reject me.

You said, if I confess with my mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in my heart that God raised him from the dead, I will be saved. Rom 10:9

I believe with all my heart that you are my Lord, raised from the dead. I confess now that you are my Master, my Savior and my Lord.

*You said: To all who received Jesus Christ, he gave the power to become children of God. **John 1:12.***

*I believe, that you give me the power to become your child. Your blood washes away all my sins and iniquities. You were wounded for my transgressions, broken for my iniquities, the punishment that I should have suffered fell on you. **Isaiah 53:5.***

From this day forward, your Word will feed me daily. It will inspire me in everything I think, say or do. Now I am your disciple, Jesus, I will represent you to the best of my ability. I know that I am saved.

Amen.

From the book *Soul Winner*, by Dr. T. L. Osborn.

NOW IN AN ACT OF FAITH, DATE AND SIGN YOUR DECISION.

**And if anything comes up to influence you
to make you doubt your decision,
get on your knees and
read aloud the decision you have made.**

To contact the author:
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A special thank you.

My great appreciation to you, *Rev. Elijah John Eloheeka*,
founder and president of
KRATOS EMBASSY CHURCH INTERNATIONAL.

The first person to encourage me with the Word from the Lord to
write this book.

You are a blessing to this generation.

I honour you with this special thanks.

Your friend.

André



And Yet...

In 1961, André-Joseph accompanied a team of missionaries across the Sahara. He left for three months as a simple driver and technician, and yet ... he will serve twenty years as a missionary and God will entrust him with a magnificent apostolate!

In Chad, with his sister Pierrette, they started alone, devoid of everything, and yet ... the Lord will bring from the ends of the earth a world-renowned evangelist who will equip them far beyond anything they could have imagined!

60 years serving in Africa



His ministry has been able to grow through the partnership with the Osborn Foundation and Church of God World Missions.



"Dear Andre,

I believe the Lord will be glorified to those who will read your book. Your story and the ways the Lord has directed your life will be an inspiration to your children and family and many others.

Your book will inspire many to give their lives to the Lord for others and for His glory."

*Irma Williams,
Church of God, Cleveland*

"After reading your book, I am convinced that it is the Lord who has led you in such a wonderful way by his immense grace! You are obviously a gift of God for Chad, which you have adopted for 20 years, and for Africa, where you still live."

*Pastor Granga Daouya,
Teacher at the Church of God in Chad*

