

Our  
**25 Years**  
in the  
**Caribbean**

LYLE PRESCOTT



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in the  
Caribbean

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By LYLE PRESCOTT

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## *Dedication*

This book of reflections  
is gratefully dedicated to  
the unique and lovable peoples  
of the Caribbean who have  
enriched my life and ministry  
across the last quarter-century.



## *Preface*

I've always loved to fish. Fishing provides the cleanest and best all-round recreation known. Anything so rewarding doesn't require much defense.

The greatest thrills I've ever experienced have come from fishing for men. It has been surprising how often angling has opened doors to soul winning. This quest for souls has led to 25 years of work in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, with additional campaigns in British Honduras, Guatemala, Haiti, Barbados, Trinidad, and Guyana. Always my heart has cried out to God for the salvation of the many people I have met. Obviously one missionary could not give extended periods of service to all the places named.

What a joy it would be if this little book should light a beacon above the Caribbean for some young Christian whom God might call to missionary service there! So may it be.

—LYLE PRESCOTT

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## CHAPTER 1

# A PANORAMA OF THE YEARS

---

*And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).*

During my student days at Pasadena College, Mrs. I. B. Staples, home on furlough from Japan, spoke on missions at the nearby Bresee Avenue Church of the Nazarene. My heart was deeply moved by her appeal for missionaries, and when she opened the altar for those who would consecrate their lives for possible foreign service, I went forward, along with a good number of other young people. As I knelt and prayed, my heart was broken up and a joyful willingness filled my soul. I could not say that God had called me to be a missionary, but I knew that I was ready to answer affirmatively, should He ever call.

My ministerial experience during those college days consisted of weekend student evangelistic band services

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and several home missions campaigns, in all of which I was invited more frequently to play the piano than to preach. Also I sang, played, and spoke in four years of service with one of the college male quartets. After graduating, I spent three more years at the college specializing in music and gaining a master of arts degree with a major in religion. During this time I served as Sunday school superintendent at the Pasadena Japanese Nazarene Mission.

At the termination of my seven years at Pasadena College, where it seemed to the campus wits that I had become almost as permanent a fixture as Dr. Wiley, my wife and I accepted a call to pastor the Eastside Church of the Nazarene in Denver, Colo. Following the two years of ministry in Denver, we moved to the pastorate in Grand Junction, Colo. It was during this time that an increasing unrest settled upon us, with a growing conviction that we could and should be doing foreign missionary work.

A third pastoral call found us at Omaha, Neb., First Church. But the burden of missionary service continued. When Dr. C. Warren Jones, executive secretary of the Department of Foreign Missions, visited Omaha Central Church, I spoke to him personally about our interest in missionary service. He was encouraging and recommended that I write an explanatory letter to the Department. Also he urged me to go to Des Moines, Ia., to see Dr. J. B. Chapman, who would be conducting the Iowa District Assembly there the following week. I wrote the letter and went to Des Moines.

When I approached Dr. Chapman about my interest in missions, he smiled kindly and said briefly, "You see my wife about missions; that's her department." Mrs. Louise Robinson Chapman was enthusiastic about our burden for missions. Figuratively, she added a couple of tons to it.

Soon we received a letter from Dr. Jones promising us a meeting with the Department of Foreign Missions during the General Assembly in June at Minneapolis. With joy and excitement we prepared to drive to Minneapolis. There we appeared before the Department and requested to be sent to Guatemala, where our greatest interest had centered.

Soon Dr. Jones came smilingly from the General Assembly auditorium and greeted us with what to us was earth-shaking news: "Brother and Sister Prescott, you folks are under appointment! And we're going to send you to the Virgin Islands."

We accepted this announcement with a wave of gladness—mixed with something akin to consternation. True, it was a great honor to be among the very first missionary appointees of that famous 400 that our church was endeavoring to find in a fervent coast-to-coast search. But what about Guatemala? And besides, I whispered to my wife, where in the world were the Virgin Islands?

On October 10, 1944, after several months of deputation work plugging for the U.S. Virgin Islands (which, incidentally, are located just east of Puerto Rico in the Caribbean Sea, and which are not another way to spell Cape Verde Islands), we disembarked from a small passenger plane at the Alexander Hamilton Airport on St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. Our hearts were filled with gladness.

Our task was twofold. First, we were to develop the small Nazarene mission into an organized church. Second, and equally important, we were to affiliate ourselves with the new Nazarene work on the island of Puerto Rico, 100 miles to the northwest. To borrow a phrase from General Superintendent H. V. Miller, we were by the "genius of our personality" to make genuine Nazarenes of our Borinquen brethren. (Borinquen was the original Indian name for that island.)



In a year's time our Cruzan mission had grown from 10 to 20 members. Also during that year I made eight trips by plane to Puerto Rico, visiting every church and holding one revival campaign in San Juan, with the national superintendent as my interpreter.

Toward the end of our first year on the field we were privileged to have Dr. C. Warren Jones as our island guest. The weather was most uncooperative. It rained torrents much of the time during his visit and especially at the hour of services. Never had our attendance been so puny. Everything looked unfavorable for a strong Nazarene work. This, combined with the claim of the Puerto Rico national superintendent that he had been promised that no American missionary would be set over him, led Dr. Jones to decide upon a new location for the Prescotts.

On November 10, 1945, after turning our flock over to the Pilgrim Holiness church, we sadly left the Virgin Islands for a new assignment in Cuba, a thousand miles to the west. We spent 12 years in Cuba—years of hard toil, heavy burdens, and exhilarating victories for Christ. Missionary recruits from time to time joined us, and each one made some special contribution to the Kingdom. God gave us a force of national pastors loyal to Christ and the Church of the Nazarene. Their quality may be judged by their steadfastness when the Cuban government became Communist. Not only has the work survived under these extremely difficult conditions, but it has grown. Much of this success we attribute to the missionary staff's insistence that ministers and laymen, particularly those in places of leadership in the church, be definitely saved and entirely sanctified. Also credit must be given to the wisdom of the General Board's policy that its foreign work be carried on free from political involvements.

In God's providence, a missionary vacancy occurred in Puerto Rico in 1957. The General Board requested us

to move to the "Pearl of the Antilles" to fill the superintendency there. Perhaps we were given this assignment because of our original relationship to Puerto Rico, or perhaps because I had visited the field twice from Cuba to preach for youth camps. At any rate, our move was six months ahead of the fall of the Cuban government, and the timing enabled us to ship everything we needed, including our car.

We invested four happy years in Puerto Rico. The growth of our church has coincided with the increasing political stability and the industrial expansion aided by "Operation Bootstrap." American capital was invited, American industries were encouraged by generous tax-free offers, and American missionaries were welcomed. Out of an original situation of grave complexity and heartache for the missionaries evolved a band of national pastors of stalwart character, ability, generosity, and loyalty to the doctrine of heart holiness.

The marvel of missionary review is not how different the peoples of the isles are from each other, but how beautifully alike they become when transformed by the grace of God.

And now our twenty-fifth year in the Caribbean finds us back on the island of St. Croix among the Virgin Islanders. How did this happen? Elderly Brother De-Grasse explains it this way: "Our prayers have followed you across the years. We didn't want you to leave in the first place. Our prayers have been drawing you back!"

In 1960, at the close of a six-year term divided between Cuba and Puerto Rico, we furloughed in the United States. When we appeared before the Department of World Missions for reappointment, we requested that we be returned to the Virgin Islands to reopen work there. Our request was granted with the understanding that the Virgin Islands should be considered an outreach

of the Puerto Rico field, now known as the Puerto Rico-Virgin Islands field.

So here we are today in our eighth year of Virgin Island ministry, our four children grown and gone, our hair graying fast, our eight grandchildren growing tall, and our hearts full of love for our islanders. The work of the Church of the Nazarene, our special corner of the Lord's vineyard, is growing too—but more of that in a later chapter.

### THE CHALLENGE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

*The turquoise hue of crystal bay  
Attracts incredulous eyes;  
Then sapphire melts to cobalt depth,  
Where soon all light it denies.*

*The sighing of foam on coral reefs  
With thundering alternates;  
The trade winds rustle through coco palms  
Or chatter where tippit tree shakes.*

*Above the ivory rim of shore  
The green-clad hills extend,  
And many an ancient Danish mill  
Recalls the cane and the wind.*

*The Old World culture of bygone days  
Clings yet with winsome grace;  
And Creole speech on islanders' tongues  
Lands charm to Caribbean place.*

*The seven flags o'er Virgin Isles  
Bespeak a troubled past;  
Columbus planted the banner of Spain!  
The Stars and Stripes stand last.*

*Conquistadores met Carib canoes  
And fought in Salt River Bay;  
But Nazarenes come by Caribair  
To preach Christ's love today.*

*The Danes have gone; the dark man stays;  
The Puerto Rican arrives;  
And waves of State-side colonists  
Bring children and their wives.*

*New industry, new services,  
The popular tourist trade  
Invite new blood to exciting shores  
Where fortunes wait to be made.*

*The census lists in heaven's book  
No Negro, Latin, or white,  
But only immortal souls of men  
Who need the gospel light.*

*To whitened harvest in Carib field  
We bend in toil and prayer;  
To meet the challenge of future yield,  
We labor, love, and dare!*

—L. P.



## CHAPTER 2

### *BABES IN THE WOODS*

---

*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way (Ps. 37:23).*

When we first moved from Trinidad, Cuba, to Havana in 1946 to open missionary work for the Church of the Nazarene in the capital, we felt like babes in the woods—helpless. Our command of Spanish was limited, our funds were low, but our faith in God was high. Already, reviewing our path from Omaha to the Virgin Islands, to the town of Trinidad in central Cuba, then on to the capital, we could definitely trace the leadership of the Lord. It was just that between the fire by night and the cloud by day there still remained very much for us to do. And we hardly knew how to go about our part. We often asked ourselves with a smile, How did the General Board happen to send out such ignorant missionaries as we?

With the rates of even a very modest hotel fast eating up our funds, and with a new little missionary sched-



uled to arrive quite soon, we decided our first job was to find and rent a house. Then would come language study, selection of a mission location, and the glorious day of beginning services in Spanish. In the meantime, how did you go about renting a house in a strange city of a million population?

I bought a copy of the city's one English-speaking newspaper. The rental columns offered only mansions ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,200 per month. Obviously we weren't going to open work in Country Club! Besides, Dr. C. Warren Jones had advised us that we could spend "as high as \$30.00 a month" for a house. Cuba was close to the United States and prices were bound to be reasonable—so he had assumed.

I tried again. I bought a Spanish paper and ran down the most reasonable thing listed. It turned out to be the opportunity to live with an elderly landlady and her dog, at \$80.00 a month. The dog wasn't pleasant and the landlady's disposition was no better.

At nights in our hotel room we would review our situation, have family worship and beseech the Lord to lead us to the right house. Available food was making us sick, and other hotel guests were complaining about the noise our three children made.

As a last resort I decided to strike out alone on a city bus, ride until I came to an appealing neighborhood, get off, and canvass the community for a house for rent. It sounded a little crazy, but we were getting desperate.

The next day I boarded a bus going west. I didn't know it then, but when the bus drove across the Almen-  
dares River bridge it left Havana and entered the adjoining town of Marianao. After a half-hour or less I found myself in a quiet, respectable-looking community that appealed to me. I pulled the cord to signal a stop, jumped from the bus, and knocked at the door of the first house I came to.

In my hesitant Spanish, I asked the maid who responded to my knock, "Do you know of an empty house for rent in this neighborhood?"

Puzzled, she asked, "What did you say?"

I repeated the question more slowly.

"I think," answered the patient maid, "that there is a house for rent just around the corner."

I thanked her, begged her pardon for my interrupting her work, and set out hopefully for the house around the corner. I was praying as I walked.

When I knocked at the door and expressed my interest in renting a house, I could not believe my ears. Yes, the pleasant cottage and yard at the rear of the house was empty, clean, furnished, and waiting for me! The landlady was pleased that I had come so soon. Would I care to see the place?

It was too good to be true! And the rent was reasonable. I knew Grace would like the house, yard, and location—and the pleasant landlady, too.

Before I could close the deal, there was a knock at the door and the landlady turned to greet a smiling young Cuban gentleman. His name was Guillermo Bolet. He was an evangelical; his sister was to leave soon as a missionary to Spain; and his older brother, Jorge, was a world-famous concert pianist.

In good English, Sr. Bolet explained, "I'm sorry, but there has been an embarrassing mistake. I have already agreed to rent this house to an American missionary family of my church. This lady thought you were that missionary. Will you forgive us this error?"

So close and yet so far!

It was an exciting experience to meet such gracious and charming people. And my theory of how to do house hunting had appeared brilliant for a few minutes. This was the sort of clock-work perfection that could happen

only in a storybook. No wonder it had not worked out in real life.

But it did work out.

"Let me buy a newspaper," Sr. Bolet offered, "and help you look for a house. I have some free time."

We excused ourselves from the landlady and left for the nearest newsstand. Sr. Bolet found an advertisement for a house located about 15 minutes by bus from where we stood. We rode together to an area called Ampliacion de Almendares, where we found a new apartment available at a price I could pay. I rented it. It was not ideal, but it got us out of the hotel and offered us the assistance we needed at that stage of our missionary work.

The story does not end here. Sr. Bolet took me to an evangelical Spanish teacher nearby, introduced me, and arranged for regular language lessons for my wife and myself. God was leading us.

Nor was this the end. Before Sr. Bolet's missionary sister left for Spain she turned over to me her rented mission hall on Villegas St. in Old Havana along with its congregation. Eventually it became our first organized Church of the Nazarene in Havana. Out of that little church came several pastors, some of them still with us today and faithfully carrying on the work in Cuba.

Do you say that God does not hear and answer prayer? Ah, but He does! What seemed for a moment to be a disappointment later turned into a fulfillment far beyond our asking.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way."

Yes, babes in the woods we were. But don't forget who is Caretaker of the woods.



## CHAPTER 3

# THE SUCCESS OF THE PLODDER

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*And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind (I Sam. 2:35).*

In Oriente, easternmost of Cuba's six provinces, is located Central Preston, known as the largest of the nation's many sugar plantations. This was considered quite a distinction in a country once famous as "the sugar bowl of the world." Scattered about among many miles of well-organized cane fields were various villages where the hundreds of workmen lived.

One day a little boy baby was born into the home of the Izquierdo family. Senor Izquierdo was not rich, for he was only a cane worker on the huge Preston plantation, but he had a steady job and tried to care for his family the best he could on his limited salary. He chose the name Thomas for his new son.

Thomas learned to work at a very early age, and his father insisted that he do his work well. When he

reached the age to attend classes, he enrolled in an elementary school provided by the plantation. Thomas was never considered brilliant but he was friendly, patient, quiet, and well-behaved. He could have gone on to high school had not the pressure of poverty forced him to leave school to work in the cane fields even before he graduated from the eighth grade. Though not tall, he was strong, and his father saw in the stalwart, steady boy a source of added income for the family.

Thomas never dressed extravagantly, but what clothes he had were well cared for. He always appeared in town after work hours in neatly pressed trousers and wearing a clean, white *guayabera*. This garment is the typical shirt-jacket of the Cuban people, whether in the country or in the city. It is a long-sleeved, somewhat loose-fitting shirt worn outside the belt, with open throat and four pockets generously embellished with buttons.

Thomas' one extravagance was cologne. His daily routine called for an afternoon bath after the long, sweaty hours in the cane fields, followed by a generous application of strong-smelling masculine cologne.

One night Thomas visited an evangelical meeting, and a glorious thing happened: He was definitely saved. Soon after this he was convinced that God was calling him to preach. Through a series of providences he was led to the Nazarene Bible Institute at La Chorrera de Managua, on the southern outskirts of Havana.

Although Thomas did not shine as an outstanding student, he was always eager to testify for Christ. He was willing to accept any opportunity to preach. When work details were assigned, Thomas never shirked his part of the campus work program, which helped the students with the expenses of room, board, and tuition. The 10 acres of the mission center provided such jobs as lawn mowing, planting, fence repair, painting on buildings,



janitoring, cooking, table setting, dishwashing, laundering, and clothes pressing.

Thomas was endowed with a strong baritone voice. For both singing and speaking, his voice was a fine asset. His spirit was never coarse.

One day the teachers and students of our Bible school were invited to visit a government polytechnical school. We loaded our group into the G.M.C. carryall and the Pontiac station wagon (the latter a gift of a Dayton, Ohio, Nazarene group), and set out on the 15-mile trip.

What began as a pleasant excursion ended in near-tragedy when the driver of the carryall began to speed and weave back and forth along the highway. While passing another car on the road, he lost control of his vehicle. We in the station wagon following watched in terror as the carryall skidded crazily and then rolled over two and a half times, coming to rest upside down in the grass beside the highway.

As we pulled alongside seconds later, what a relief it was to see windows open and teacher and students come scrambling out! Among the occupants of the illfated G.M.C. was our own 12-year-old son, Woody. It was reported by other passengers that Woody kept shouting in Spanish, "Everybody keep calm! Everybody keep calm!" while he himself was clawing madly to get out through the nearest open window. Fortunately the glass was shatterproof but there was a kaleidoscopic mixture of people and car seats as the carryall rested upside down on its flattened top.

Luciano Morejon, one of our preacher boys, suffered a sprained shoulder, and it was many months before he was able to work without some pain. The only person not fully conscious was Thomas Izquierdo. He looked normal but he spoke irrationally. He could not grasp

what had happened, and kept asking, "Where am I? What happened?"

Many motorists stopped at the scene of the accident. With a sizable crowd of willing helpers, the G.M.C. was soon rolled back onto its wheels and found to be still operative. Slowly it was driven back to the mission center, later to be put into a garage for repair and repainting.

I took the two injured students at once to the emergency hospital (in Spanish called a House of Help) near our mission center. Thomas was ordered to bed for complete rest. We put him in a bedroom in our mission home and kept a close watch over him. Before long he became fully rational. We thanked the Lord with deeply grateful hearts that nobody had suffered serious or permanent injury from the accident.

One of the leading characteristics of Thomas' personality was courage. This grew out of two roots: a natural spirit of boldness, and a definite work of heart cleansing by the Holy Spirit. In him was fulfilled the promise of Jesus: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Whether he was speaking to a farmer or a university professor, he boldly proclaimed Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. Thomas knew that God had done a great work in his heart.

Our Bible school students worked among all our Cuban churches and preaching points. At Reparto Juanelo, a section of Havana, Thomas met a lovely young lady named Teresa. She was a girl of steady Christian experience. In the mysterious way of the heart, Thomas and Teresa fell in love. After his graduation from our Nazarene Bible Institute in 1956 they were married in a pretty wedding in the Juanelo church.

Their first charge was a new church at Curva de Cataluña in Havana Province. This project had been successfully launched by Missionaries Ardee and Faith Coolidge, who served as its first pastors. Two miles farther south

was the fishing village of Guanimar, where Nazarenes had a cottage chapel. Thomas also pastored this preaching point.

Guanimar was first called to our attention by Mrs. Louise Chapman as we were returning together by plane from a visit to the Isle of Pines. The plane's route into Havana's airport brought us over this picturesque town set between two canals at the Gulf of Batabano. From the plane, the numerous fishing craft anchored just offshore made the bay look like a pond full of ducks. A peculiar burden for this unknown community gripped Mrs. Chapman and she urged us to investigate the possibilities of opening gospel work there. This investigation resulted in the establishment of a mission in Guanimar and six more churches or missions farther inland along the road between there and Havana.

The Izquierdos rented a simple *bohio* (a palm-thatched country cottage) next door to the Cataluña church. Picturesque though it may have looked—painted bright orange and set among flowers and graceful banana trees—it was not a very sturdy or sanitary house to live in. Its occupants were forced to share their space with mice, rats, scorpions, cockroaches, flies, and literally thousands of mosquitoes. This part of Havana Province boasted very rich soil and many springs of fresh water, but its low-lying position made it a haven for mosquitoes. And what does a mosquito love more than human blood?

In due season a baby boy came to bless the home of Thomas and Teresa. The baby helped to bind together the hearts of pastor and parishioners. Thomas was extremely happy, and like any normal, proud father, was eager to show his small son to every interested party.

When we were transferred, in 1957, to Puerto Rico, Thomas and Teresa were still pastoring at Curva de Cataluña and Guanimar. Their task was not an easy one but they were faithful to their mission. At the hour of ser-



vice anybody passing by heard the big voice of Thomas leading his congregation in singing the songs of our Zion or declaring the eternal truths of the gospel.

When I think of Thomas Izquierdo, I recall words from a message by my late college pastor, Dr. R. J. Plum "I am a great believer in the ultimate success of the plodder." Both Dr. Plumb and Thomas, in their respective ways and places of service, provide remarkable demonstrations of this philosophy of life.



## CHAPTER 4

# WHEN LOSSES WERE GAINS

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*Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! (Num. 23:23)*

How excited we were when we first discovered the 10-acre recreational farm of the wealthy Rivera family and learned that the property was, without general announcement, up for sale. It was located right on the main north-and-south paved highway between Havana and the southern gulf town of Batabano, and passed through the military town of Managua. There was regular public bus service with frequent runs passing right by the door. The expression "recreational farm" meant that the owners were people of means who lived in the city but kept a country home with ornate grounds, fruit trees, and poultry houses, where they could escape from the noise and bustle of the city to dabble in a little "gentleman farming." Such a farm property provided a kind of status symbol among the Cuban gentry.

The Rivera family had just decided to dispose of their small farm at La Chorrera de Managua and reinvest in a beach home. We contacted them at just the right time. The purchase was effected for \$13,500 on May 17, 1950. This included a roomy old Spanish country house (with a hive of wild bees in the west wall), palm-thatched garage, and three poultry houses. Surrounding the buildings were attractive lawns and hedges, along with shade and fruit trees native to the tropics. Over the front gate facing the highway we erected a nicely lettered sign, "NAZARENE MISSIONARY CENTER," in Spanish. A tall stand of graceful bamboo on either side of the gate gave the entrance a look of dignity and charm.

Anyone desiring to get off at the Nazarene property had only to say the word "Nazarene" and the conductor would stop at our front gate.

As funds were made available, the better of the three poultry houses was converted into a chapel and Bible school classrooms. For a while it even served as a community chapel. Later women's and men's dormitories were added to the grounds. Another poultry house was remodelled into a kitchen and dining hall. Funds were scarce and we had to make do. The third poultry house was torn down to make room for a more substantial masonry classroom building.

Eventually a second missionary home was built farther back on the farm, where a knoll gave access to available breezes during the long summers. Then a frame laundry was added for use by the Bible school students.

Close by the laundry stood the original palm-thatch garage and storage building. One night I dreamed that I was escorting a group of visiting ministers over our little farm. I had just arrived at the storage building, which in my dream had been rebuilt into a fine, modern warehouse. Upon entering with my friends I was alarmed to find a thief in the building looting. As the culprit made a

wild dash for the door through which we had just entered, I shouted in Spanish, "Catch him! Catch him!" But none of the visiting men of the cloth was quick enough to nab the intruder. Suddenly the fleeing wretch was dashing past me. I made a mighty flying tackle to pin him down—and landed full length on the hard tile of my bedroom floor, the breath and the dream both knocked out of me.

My wife awoke and cried out, "Lyle, Lyle, what is the matter? What has happened to you?"

After I could get my breath back I picked myself up from the floor, rubbed my several bruises, and recounted my dream. Neither of us has ever been able to learn what became of the looter. But for a split second I was sure that I had caught him. At least, I tried.

October 31, 1951, was a day of great rejoicing when a 40' x 60' frame tabernacle was dedicated on the Center by Dr. D. I. Vanderpool, presiding general superintendent. It became the site of some of our greatest Cuban spiritual victories. The first camp meeting was conducted before the erection of the tabernacle—in one of the revamped poultry houses. It was unseasonably cold for Cuba that year. A roll of heavy, wide wrapping paper was bought and the open room was literally wrapped up to keep out the rain and chilling wind. Our workers were Dr. and Mrs. C. Warren Jones. It was disconcerting to us, after fussing so much over the sides of the makeshift building, to see, on one warmer day, a large blob of soft tar drip down onto the lapel of Mrs. Jones's pretty new suit!

But more than tar fell; the glory of God came down upon us and outstanding victories were experienced at the full altars. A night watchman found the Lord and later opened his home in a neighboring town for mission services. When God moved upon us, we forgot about the



cold and the discomforts and the oddity of a chicken-house chapel encircled in brown wrapping paper.

A neighbor came to hear Dr. Jones preach on heaven. "Why," he exclaimed in amazement, "it sounds as if that man had already been there! He talks about the streets of the New Jerusalem the way I talk about the streets of Havana."

There was a victorious sweep in the final service of the camp. We witnessed the unique working of the Holy Spirit in the altar service when, at almost the same second, five people arose with a beautiful demonstration of victory in the Lord.

The workers for our second camp meeting, held in the new Tabernacle, were Mrs. Louise Chapman and Miss Fairy Chism, whom we called "the elect ladies." Through their strong preaching of holiness and their insistence upon a very definite experience of entire sanctification, a number of our ministerial students were established in their Christian experience and in their call to preach. Well did they need this vital establishing for the critical tests of the future. Little did they dream of the changes that would come over Cuba, but always we insisted in the classroom and from the pulpit, "You must be sanctified wholly to stand!"

A few months after we were transferred to Puerto Rico in 1957, the government of Cuba, as is well-known, underwent radical changes. All American missionaries were directed to leave the country. Under the efficient direction of Rev. John Hall, the work was turned over to national leadership. A full program has been continued. Former Bible school graduates assumed the leadership in ministerial training at the farm campus. Annual camp meetings have been conducted, and it is reported that larger-than-ever crowds are attending, with gracious times of spiritual victory. The work continues to grow.

But there have been problems peculiar to the times.



The Cuban army took over the adjoining farm to the south and it became a military camp. Added to this, the long, bamboo-lined lane bordering our property on the opposite side became an army campground, with tents pitched the full length of our property. Our pie-shaped tract of land was thus surrounded with an army encampment on two sides and a military highway on the other.

In the early days after the take-over, there were occasional bombing raids by planes from off the island. The military bases around Havana seemed the special targets. The faculty and students took stock of the vulnerable position of their farm, and when nights were shattered by the concussion of exploding bombs, they had ample reason for fear and trembling.

Serious conferences were held to devise plans for protection in case of attack. At last it was decided to thoroughly pad the girls' prayer chapel, a sturdy little masonry building, with spare mattresses from the dormitories. If a bombing raid came, those present on the grounds were to crawl into their mattress shelter and wait it out, prayerfully.

One night an air base a few miles away became the object of a raid. Spirits quailed before the thunder of exploding bombs. The earth trembled. But for some reason nobody was willing to hide in the mattress shelter!

The safety problem was unexpectedly resolved when the government suddenly notified the national superintendent that they were going to trade a larger farm property west of the capital for the strategic 10-acre mission center. The new property was considerably larger but it had only a simple farmhouse on it. Still, it had good soil and was located in a safer area. The move has been effected and the Bible school continues undaunted. The old Nazarene Mission Center was turned into a military hospital by the government.

Knowing the background of purchase, development, and spiritual progress experienced on the site at La Chorrera de Managua, it is not surprising that the loss of our property was accompanied by tears and anguish of heart. But do we not really believe that "he doeth all things well"? And do we not still rest on Rom. 8:28?

Let us continue in love and compassion to pray for our brethren in Cuba. Let us believe staunchly that in God's good time we shall be able to declare once more, "What hath God wrought!"

A recent letter from a minister of another denomination in Cuba brings the encouraging news that the Bible school in June, 1968, graduated four or five students. A letter from our national superintendent in Cuba received still more recently informs us that a full dozen students are enrolled in our Nazarene Bible Institute.

Thank God, the work goes on!

#### MY HEART TURNS BACK TO CUBA

*While holly gleams in Washington  
And chicadees sing in Maine,  
While lakes freeze over in Idaho  
And Oregon grows roses in rain,  
While Florida skies are sunny  
And California hills turn green—  
My heart turns back to Cuba  
And its tropical Christmas scene.*

*Cuba's sun is shining its softest  
And the nights are like dreams in spring;  
Poinsettia is tall and scarlet,  
And mockers and warblers sing.  
The storms of the summer are over;  
The winds of the autumn are still.  
No snow ever falls on this island;  
Never come frosts that kill.*

*The markets are full of turkeys,  
And peddlers sell guineas and hens,  
While on a hundred corners  
Men gather about pigpens.  
The high point of all's "Noche Buena,"  
When families unite to dine  
At Christmas Eve at midnight  
On black beans, roast pig, and wine.*

*How late they feast and banquet!  
How drunken so many become!  
How long they dance and revel!  
How heathen their wine and rum!  
How little they think on Jesus,  
Whose birth they pretend to extol,  
While ecstatic guitars strum endless  
And drums thru' the wild night roll!*

*Then, when sin is most loathsome,  
And Christ is dishonored the worst,  
Groups of Nazarenes gather  
And sweet hymns of worship burst  
From the lips of dozens of carolers  
Who travel from town to town  
To sing the praises of Jesus  
And tell how from heav'n He came down.*

*Crowds gather about them at corners  
And families come out to hear,  
While sometimes the traffic lingers  
And often folk clap and cheer.  
There's something appealing in Jesus,  
And especially at Christmastime.  
It's more than gifts and feasting;  
It's faith that Christ is divine!*

*All who believe in Him love Him,  
And all who adore Him know  
That Christmas is more than a banquet  
And more than a yearly show.  
They know there are hymns in Havana  
Because there is music above;  
They know there is hope in Mañana  
Because there's a God of love!*

*The brightest flowers in Cuba  
Are not on the florist's cart:  
They bloom with the richest fragrance  
In the sanctified Nazarene heart.  
The sweetest songs at Christmas  
Are not carols the radio repeats;  
They spring from bands of Nazarenes  
Who sing of Christ on the streets.*

—L. P.



## CHAPTER 5

# PUERTO RICO: LAND OF PROGRESS

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*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Cor. 5:17).*

In the "Polar Bear," Puerto Rican nickname for the island's white prison buildings, there is an organized evangelical church called the "Second Corinthians 5:17 Church." Its members are all converted inmates of the prison. Its pastor is a Christian lady from the outside, a kind of chaplain, whose special ministry across the years has been to help the families of the inmates, particularly their small children.

It was once the good fortune of the Nazarene Bible Institute Band, of which I was the bassoonist, to be invited to the prison to play for this church. I think I have never seen a brighter- and happier-looking group of men than these. Their faces beamed as they sang the praises of Christ. And when they testified, it was with

a vivacity and joy seldom encountered. Here was a group of men who would be safe to turn back into society.

The prison authorities recognized the value of good religion in transforming the lives of the inmates, and they were wise enough to encourage this religious movement. But not all governments abroad share this concept of the therapeutic and reorienting value of the Christian faith, especially in its Protestant branch. The old government of Cuba had many departments where Catholicism was favored, but where Protestantism was either coolly tolerated or openly harassed. In many areas of the world, governments encourage Christianity's expression in such practical institutions as day schools, colleges, nurses' training schools, hospitals, and agricultural projects, but they draw the line at the simple preaching of the gospel. They ought to attend a chapel service at the Polar Bear!

In the last 25 years Puerto Rico has seen many changes. Take pigs, for example. The favorite dish is barbecued pork, especially at Christmastime. During that season many a corner in town used to have its temporary pigpen full of noisome swine. In 1944 on a Christmas visit to Santurce, elite residential area of the Puerto Rican capital, I witnessed a huge sow being coaxed and pulled, amidst her cacophonous accompaniment of squeals and grunts, right up Ponce de Leon Avenue, the main business street of the city.

Today such a sight would be frowned upon by the well-dressed citizens of the city. No more pigs on Ponce! Besides, the pig could not compete with the modern traffic anyway.

My earliest memories of Puerto Rico include some chilling sights. The business areas of the capital were cluttered with pitiable beggars so seated upon the sidewalks or in store entrances as to best expose their open sores, deformities, or amputations. A customer seated in a restaurant at a window table was sure to be haunted

by the beseeching eyes and outstretched hands of beggars tapping at his window. It did nothing to improve the appetite.

Businessmen became so harassed by the streams of beggars who poured into the commercial areas from the slums to molest both them and their customers that they finally got together and formed a united policy. They agreed to give money to beggars only on Fridays. All other days beggars should be denied entrance. After that, you should have seen the frenzy of Friday beggars rushing from store to store, in each place hurrying to the cashier, wordlessly extending their hands for whatever coin the store had decided to dole out, then scurrying on. At some places they would receive a nickel, at others a dime. If it were only a penny, a fuss was made. Customers learned to avoid shopping on Fridays, if they wearied of beggars.

Today Puerto Rico has far fewer beggars. Work is more plentiful, salaries are higher, and begging is increasingly frowned upon. Health services for the poor are better, and federal surplus food supplies are available to the needy. The island has shared in the general state-side affluence. Children have grown up with better educations and are equipped for greater self-reliance.

The squalid and odoriferous slums of Puerto Rico, especially those mud-flat shacktowns about the capital, have long been recognized as breeding places for disease and crime. They so ill impressed visitors that the entire island became unjustly known abroad as "the poorhouse of the United States." On the island some of the worst slums were given such ironical titles by the Puerto Ricans themselves as "The Pearl," "The Little Nuns," and "The Little Mud Hole."

At last the United States Government was goaded into doing something constructive for its Caribbean step-child. It now works cooperatively with the island's own



government in trying to abolish the slums. The most obvious effort to supply a remedy is the construction of housing projects, called *caserios*. Specifically, the large project of Lloren Torres in Santurce was built to relocate the poor in the shacktown of La Perla, located outside the ancient walls of Old San Juan. So many housing projects have been built in Puerto Rico that the United States Government has located one of its seven regional centers of the Public Housing Administration (P.H.A.) in San Juan.

The island now has a cleaner look. The problem of slums is not licked yet, but the public conscience has been aroused, and things are moving. The new governor of Puerto Rico has pledged to use every means at his disposal to eliminate slums.

Housing projects create their own set of problems. As soon as word gets around that the city planning board has approved a certain area for the erection of a housing project, the real-estate value of the surrounding residential areas drops. The problem of thievery grows, for children and youth from the projects fan out through the adjacent neighborhoods to pilfer and steal. It is one thing to take the people out of the slums; it is another thing to take the slums out of the people.

It must not be inferred that everybody who is poor or who lives in a housing project is dishonest and untrustworthy. Some of our finest Nazarenes are residents of such projects. Christians are the best renters anywhere, and they express Christlikeness wherever they live. The government has recognized the moral and social value of the churches, so has designated certain plots of ground in each housing project for the erection of church buildings.

An officer of the San Juan Housing Administration confided to me that he would like to see a plan created whereby many of the moral and social problems of the



project rentees could be turned over to competent, spiritual ministers. He felt that the most common problems of occupants were not the kind to be solved by the local housing administration at all. Rather they were of such a nature that counseling and prayer would do more good.

Recently the P.H.A. of San Juan has been conducting workshops to help local housing authorities to have a more humane attitude toward the occupants. Rather than lord it over the rentees, they are urged to regard themselves as servants of the public, seeking to serve rather than to be served. It sounds like Christianity.

Along with the emergence of a substantial middle class of people in Puerto Rico has appeared a strong tide toward education. Many of our own Nazarene youths are either graduates of the University of Puerto Rico or are students enrolled in the university. Some of our pastors, finding themselves outstripped in education by their own sons and daughters and other young people of their pastorates, have enrolled in the university. Several of our Nazarene Bible Institute graduates are in the United States working on degrees so that they might better serve the spiritual needs of their own people.

The cultural level of the island has soared. The fact that Pablo Casals, world's foremost cellist, is a Puerto Rican and resides in San Juan has done much to advance the appreciation and study of music. For years the island has celebrated a spring "Casals Festival," featuring its own maestro in solo work or conducting a fine symphony orchestra, and importing some of the world's greatest musicians. People come to this festival from all over the Caribbean, as well as from the United States.

The creation in San Juan and in Ponce, at opposite sides of the island, of a Free School of Music has greatly encouraged the study of music and the organization of orchestras and smaller musical groups. Any student se-

riously interested in learning to play almost any instrument can borrow the instrument and receive regular free instruction. This incidentally, is how I learned to play the bassoon.

The demand for more advanced study of music led the government to create the Puerto Rican Conservatory of Music at San Juan, with top-notch imported teachers. At this school the Nazarene district superintendent, William Porter, recently earned a bachelor of music degree. He plays French horn in the Puerto Rican Symphony, and recently was on a three-week tour with the group, visiting Merida, Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Miami.

With the advance of true Christianity has generally come an advance of prosperity, education, and culture. However, it is not uncommon for these children of the Church, when grown, to become quite materialistic and self-sufficient, forgetting from whence they came, and even denying their dependence upon the Church. It is then easy for the head to disown the heart. When affluence, education, and culture become divorced from the spiritual Church, they become morally corrupt and lead to self-destruction.

It is the task of the Church of the Nazarene in Puerto Rico, along with every vital denomination, to savor the land with spiritual salt, to help balance society with moral soundness, which is just another way of saying "old-fashioned holiness." Progress cannot be permanent if it is not based on simple goodness.

The Church, with its message from God, is at the core of a nation's progress. Puerto Rico, hold on to God!

## CHAPTER 6

# MIRACLES ON THE EMERALD ISLE

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*Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes (Isa. 54:2).*

*First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear (Mark 4:28).*

The Emerald Isle of Puerto Rico is roughly a rectangle 100 miles in length and 35 miles wide. Around its perimeter are sloping plains beautiful with sugarcane, pineapple, and coconut palms. The rest of the land is dominated by steep hills and mountains rising to more than 3,000-foot elevation. There is a wealth of topographical variety from luxurious beaches to cool rain forests. Modern freeways are beginning to appear in the dense traffic patterns of the large coastal cities. The flamboyant, tree-lined pavements that wind endlessly through the panoramic uplands lead to the colorful little towns quaint with the charm of an older era and gentled with the slower pace of a peaceful mountain people.



Once while participating in the annual youth camp on the outskirts of hilltop Barranquitas, I walked alone to a quiet, bamboo-lined arroyo. Here I experienced the excitement of seeing a dwarf emerald kingfisher, an exquisitely beautiful and rare bird. Ornithologists in Puerto Rico bewail the decrease of this and other species of birds. But with the expansion of human society some species of birds inevitably will be lost.

But this is not our special concern. Among the things that are disappearing rapidly in Puerto Rico are Puerto Ricans! A horrifying conclusion published by a team of American traffic experts, after a recent survey on the island, was that fatalities from traffic accidents are three times as high as the average in the United States. It is as if some berserk Baal were set banefully upon converting the boulevards of Borinquen into the bloody corridors of a traffic abattoir. (But lest I seem to be unfairly prejudiced against my former island home, let me state here that a still more recent survey by a similar American team of traffic experts reveals exactly the same ghastly figures about the Virgin Islands.)

With its two and one-half million people, Puerto Rico is one of the most densely populated areas of the world. These figures throw out a great challenge to the Church of the Nazarene. We ministers of the gospel are really human conservationists. Beyond all mere alleviation of ills through social reform, we see the immortal souls of men in danger of spiritual damnation. If we see less peril than this, we are reduced to the midway level of sociologists. And many are the modern "missionaries" who no longer believe in hell or final judgment. We believe that this vast concentration of souls will either be saved in heaven or lost in hell. We are doing more than working to establish a certain denomination; we are ambassadors of a compassionate King who does not will that any should perish.

When I review the spiritual endeavors of the Church



of the Nazarene across the years that I have been associated with Puerto Rico, I must express my gratitude for this great soul-winning agency. I dare not be satisfied with our united accomplishments, yet I feel a glow of gladness for the blessing of God upon our ministry, and a thrill for the victories won. These victories have not come easily, so they assume greater significance to us.

Some highlights from the district superintendent's annual report to the 1968 Mission Council bring satisfaction to the heart.

Total district church membership now stands at 711. Total Sunday school enrollment is 2,528. The greatest increase was in Christiansted, Virgin Islands, with an upswing of 46. Half of our churches have increased the number of Sunday school rooms during the last two years. Ten churches increased their pastoral support. It is encouraging to note (1969) that there are now three churches fully self-supporting. We have seen spiritual movings among our people—the high peak being in the summer camp with young people being called to preach. There are greater revival responses in the local churches than ever before, a rising spiritual tide at the Bible school, and a greater rate of growth in our churches and Sunday schools. All of these signs indicate that God is able—in times like these!

A brief comparison will help us to see more readily the progress made. In 1959 there were 14 churches and 18 preaching points, with 521 members, and 1,444 enrolled in the Sunday schools. Regular offerings totaled \$26,386.48. By contrast, in 1968 there were 711 members and 2,528 enrolled in Sunday school with an additional 19 established churches and preaching points on the Puerto Rico-Virgin Islands field. The total raised for all purposes was \$90,211, of which \$9,488.32 was sent out to world evangelism. Per capita giving was up to \$126.88, placing this field at the top of the mission areas in this respect. (This is more meaningful when one remembers that not too

many years ago Puerto Rico was sometimes referred to disparagingly as "the poorhouse of the United States.")

When we went to Puerto Rico in 1957, the Nazarene Bible Institute was being conducted in the San Juan First Church. The Bible school director, C. W. Porter, had a private office, but the classrooms doubled with those of First Church's Sunday school. The entire neighborhood was either blessed or blasted (depending upon their respective attitudes) by the enthusiastic Bible school band trained and directed by Bill Porter. What we lacked in facilities we made up in volume. But we turned out much acceptable music and the band gained a wide reputation, playing at numerous events from funerals to graduation exercises. The Institute served as a training school for most of our national pastors, whose work reflects favorably upon the quality of their ministerial preparation.

The present director of Nazarene Bible Institute, Rev. Herbert Ratcliff, and his family live in a commodious home next door to an attractive, modern, two-story Bible school building located in a pleasant suburb of San Juan, called Extension of Country Club Manor. The 1968 school enrollment was 35, with 17 in the Department of Theology and Biblical Studies, 18 in the Department of Music. In addition, there were 14 in the extension classes or studying by correspondence. Five students were living full time at the Institute. In the total group there were six new or prospective ministers. Some of our students carried a double load, taking some classes at the University of Puerto Rico. But our school emphasizes its relationship to our Spanish-American Nazarene Seminary at San Antonio, Tex., where two of our Institute graduates pursue a Th.B. degree. One other graduate is now enrolled in Bethany Nazarene College.

When we first arrived in Puerto Rico from Cuba we found one of our leading churches without a pastor. It appeared necessary for the district superintendent, then,

to accept this pastorate as a temporary assignment. It was a year of rich experience. Some of our sweetest ties with Puerto Rico have resulted.

In this church was a lady who served as president of the missionary society, a member of the church board, and a teacher of the young people's Sunday school class. But she was very liberal in her standards of dress. Since she was so prominent in both activity and influence, the matter assumed extra importance, I felt. Her use of bright cosmetics, numerous rings, bracelets, necklace, beads, and earrings made her quite conspicuous in a congregation that was predominantly conservative in dress. However, I did not preach "at" her nor speak to her personally on the subject, but took the matter to God in prayer. It seemed to be one of those cases that required considerable time and prayer.

One Sunday morning as I walked to the pulpit to preach, the good lady in question arose and requested a moment to speak. I granted her the privilege, not sure what was coming up. The congregation turned and listened carefully.

She said: "For some time the Holy Spirit has been talking to me. I feel that God would have me to live a more careful life. When I look at all these young people who are members of my Sunday school class, I wonder whether I am setting the right example before them."

At this point she broke down in tears. After she had regained her composure she continued.

"I feel that God would have me to give up some of the things that I have been clinging to. I want my life to be exemplary and I want to help the people of our church, and especially these fine young people, to make it to heaven. I believe God would have me strip off all this jewelry!"

Upon saying this she leaned down and opened her purse and placed it like a basket on the seat. Then she



drew several rings off her fingers, dropping them into the purse. Next followed a row of jingling bracelets from one arm. Then came a string of beads from around her neck. She reached into her purse for a tissue and gave a quick swipe across her bright lips. Then with a beautiful smile upon her face sparkling with tears of joy, she raised her hands high and exclaimed, "I feel so clean! Glory to God, I feel so clean!"

What made all of us rejoice most was not the negative aspect of the absence of jewelry, but the positive life of victory and joy that from then on marked the life of this woman. Her life was radiant with the presence of Christ.

A little fishing experience once caused a dream to rise in my heart. My son, Bob, and I were returning from a day's outing at the east end of the island when we drove by an American couple camped in a house trailer along a pretty stretch of beach. On a sudden impulse I said to Bob, "You know what! Those American folks we see fishing along this shore would probably enjoy seeing our nice catch of fish. Let's stop and get acquainted with them."

"Okay, I'm with you," Bob exclaimed. So we turned around, and pulled up beside the trailer.

"Howdy!" I said as a middle-aged man and woman answered my knock at the door. "We see you folks are interested in fishing, so we thought we'd stop by and show you our catch."

"Sure, sure, let's see them!" the man exclaimed with enthusiasm, as he and his wife came down the steps and out to our car.

So that's how we got acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Leon Hulse, retired Coast Guard warrant officer and wife. We found them spiritually hungry and eager to talk about the need of their souls. Before we left we had an earnest season of prayer together, in which Mr. and



Mrs. Hulse wept unashamedly. Never before had anybody come to their home like this to counsel with them about their need of God and a change of heart, and to pray with them. The nearest they had known was a long argument by an insistent Jehovah's Witness.

The dream that rose from this experience was to organize an English-speaking Church of the Nazarene in San Juan—something to which we could invite people like Mr. and Mrs. Hulse who knew little Spanish and had no church home.

So we began to work on our dream to give it substance. I had appointed Bob pastor of a new Spanish-speaking congregation in a new housing development called Los Angeles, near the San Juan airport. Bob agreed to take on this added project.

Thus, on Easter Sunday, March 29, 1959, at three o'clock in the afternoon we opened an English-speaking church at Los Angeles. Thirteen Americans attended, including, happily, Mr. and Mrs. Hulse and Mrs. Swartz, mother of Mrs. Hulse.

From this small beginning has come the present Calvary Church of the Nazarene with Rev. and Mrs. Cleve James as pastors, appointed by the General Board. For several years it has been a fully organized congregation meeting on the premises of the Nazarene Bible Institute and has functioned as one of the strong churches on the district. A splendid tract of land has been purchased in Fontana Gardens, and plans are proceeding for a church home. Every day my dream is coming closer to full realization.

It is indeed a steep climb to get from place to place across the Emerald Isle. It is likewise a steep climb in the spiritual Kingdom but, as our district superintendent insists and as our great church believes, God is able—in times like these! We press on expecting greater miracles in Puerto Rico.

## CHAPTER 7

# *THE MISSIONARIES' CHILDREN*

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There are advantages and disadvantages in being a missionary's child. One of the disadvantages is that by the time he leaves the field to enter a stateside college he discovers too often that his early education has been a bit sketchy. He has not been very broadly prepared for college entrance. Especially does this seem to be true in the area of science courses. But he discovers also that his foreign education has put him way above his classmates in the field of languages. More than one missionary's child has been a source of embarrassment to the college language teacher who could not keep up with the youngster's conversational proficiency.

As might be expected, missionaries' children learn to "get around." They become accustomed to travel and develop quite a cosmopolitan feeling. They learn to live with people of other races and tongues and come naturally by a spirit of appreciation for them. I should think that the President would do well to search for ambassador material among missionaries' children.

Someone has affirmed that proportionately more children from ministers' families become successes in life than from any other profession. And, furthermore, the children of missionaries excel by far the children of ministers in the homeland. This is pretty vague, and all a critic might deduce from it is that the writer is vain!

Be that as it may, missionaries' children come by their advantages expensively. Our church is good to its missionary families. Considering the numerical and financial strength of our constituency, the church has been generous in its assistance to children. It readily seeks new ways to offer help. The little private missionary confabs that I have listened in on concerning this matter have revealed no complaints or bitterness.

The expensiveness has had nothing to do with money; it has been a heavy payment right out of the heart. There arise situations on the field when, to save their children, a missionary family must send them to the homeland at a tender age. If there is ever an experience of poignant grief to the missionary parent or child, it is that moment of parting. It is a kind of surgery from which some never recover. But here too the grace of God can transform sorrow to gladness, bitterness to sweet trust, and wrenching to rest. There is a sense in which both missionary parent and child must each consecrate himself to be expendable for the gospel's sake.

I shall never forget the sadness of our parting when our daughter Delia left us in Cuba to complete her high school education in the States. She cried so hard. Words were no longer a consolation. Years later I attended an airport farewell when a national pastor and his wife sent their elder son away to the States for a college education. As we stood together on the airport deck and watched the big jet roll away toward the runway, I felt keenly the pastor's grief. We embraced and wept together. But I think I was still weeping over Delia's departure



more than anything else. As I write now, a lump fills my throat.

Lest I appear maudlin, it is sane to remember that farewells are the common experience of humanity. We must all pass through the separating gates now and then. Is it not the experience of families when their sons leave for military service? And do not many young people leave home to attend college? And when children grow up, do they not generally leave home to establish new homes of their own? Is it not often in another part of the country?

Children on the mission field help to normalize life, as at home. They help to keep the family unit strong. And they add humor, too. Once Bob, when he was "Bobby" and very small, was thumbing through my dictionary and came upon a picture of the human ear. "What's that?" he asked.

"It is a picture of the human ear," I answered.

He pondered the mystery a moment, then concluded: "It can't be. Where's the ear wax?"

On one of our early plane trips we seated ourselves in the plane, fastened our safety belts, and waited. The plane took off with great smoothness, so much so that we seemed to be hanging motionless in air.

"Okay," Woody exclaimed. "What are we waiting for? Why don't we go?"

During this early flight Ruthie peeked out the plane window and spied a number of U.S. Navy ships far below us.

"Oh, look at the ducks!" she cried.

After telling these things on my children, the world will be very surprised if they achieve any kind of success.



## CHAPTER 8

# *FIRST STEPS IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS*

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Our Pan American Airways flight from Miami, Fla., to San Juan, Puerto Rico, was made interesting by a stop at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, en route. Those were World War II days and airline regulations required the stewardess to fasten dark blinds over all the plane windows before we touched down. As we left the plane we were fascinated by the little burros trotting along the road beside the airport, loaded with stuff for the city market, or headed out into the country. Our children thought it very funny to see women with big baskets of produce or merchandise balanced on their heads. The people all looked poor. And our hearts were heavy because there was no work of the Church of the Nazarene among the Haitians then. We thank the Lord for the flourishing work there now.

Our plane stopped also at Trujillo City (now Santo Domingo), capital of the Dominican Republic. Again we could not see the city from the plane because of the

blackout. We were impressed by the steep, parched, forlorn, endless mountains of that country.

Again we experienced the blackout when we came down over San Juan. To our surprise and disgust, several of us became airsick as the plane lost altitude. Especially I. And I remained sick for three days. We were met at the airport by the national pastor-superintendent, who was very attentive and courteous. He had hotel rooms reserved for us. We recall that there were two game cocks in the hotel patio and it seemed that they crowed all night long. We slept under mosquito nets, which seemed to increase the heat and humidity.

The next morning our three children were as "cross as bears," and I suppose the parents fit right in as Mother and Father Bear. It didn't help when, at breakfast, my wife found a dead cockroach in her cereal. Then before the meal was over an industrious janitor began sweeping the floor of the dining room, raising a cloud of dust. We were rather relieved when it came time to board the little Caribair Airlines plane to fly on to St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Perhaps it sounds like a chronicle of complaints. But by now, having passed through much worse things and having expanded our sense of humor a bit more, and since this area is now home to us, we can look back upon our experiences and smile as we reminisce.

We arrived safely at the tiny (in 1944) airport with its small frame buildings. We hired a taxi and drove through the pleasant countryside of St. Croix (pronounced Saint Croy here) to Christiansted, historic Danish town whose name means King Christian's town. We found it amusing, then, that the cars and two-wheeled pony and donkey carts drove on the left side of the road. It seemed that almost every hill had the ruins of an old stone windmill on it. The taxi driver told us that in the old plantation days they used wind power to grind the sugarcane and extract the juice, and that once there were 250 of these mills in use on the island. A single modern

sugar refinery, owned and run by the U.S. Government, now takes care of all this. It disturbed us to learn that our government was also in the rum distilling business at that time. Fortunately, this operation has now been discontinued.

The taxi took us to the only hotel in town, owned by a large bear of a fellow. The place looked like an antique shop. Our two-and-a-half-year-old son, Woody, promptly pulled a heavy iron doorstep over on his toe and hurt himself quite badly. He cried pitifully. The elderly manager of the hotel came up to our room and insisted that we make Woody stop crying: he was disturbing the other guests. We did our best, but he fretted all night long. Woody's first steps in the Virgin Islands were painful ones.

Our first project was to find a place to live. We learned soon that we would probably have to live a short distance out of town. The island's electric power was provided by two different systems. In the town there was direct current; and in the country, alternating current. All our electrical equipment was for alternating current, so— (Today the whole island is provided with alternating current.)

Since our furniture had not yet arrived by ship, we were forced to find a place already furnished. The kind principal of the Christiansted high school offered to let us occupy his vacant house in Frederiksted until our equipment and furniture arrived. So we moved 15 miles west. Those were rather restless days, though we spent them profitably getting acquainted with our new island home and its interesting people. We had time to get alone with God and to pray over our new field.

Our house was a charming old Danish building, with the typical "welcoming arms" stairway at the front. It had not been lived in for some time, so it was overrun with mice. We bought traps and were tempted to set up a branch store for the Hudsons Bay Company, specializ-



ing in fine mouse fur. The furnishings of mahogany would have brought a fortune in a stateside antique shop. The magnificent old beds, equipped with vast, unyielding mattresses, had huge pillows of a concrete-like texture. Between the heat of the breathless nights and the solidity of the pillows our sleep was something less than restful. Later I saw men sitting out in the yards at siesta time napping as they leaned against hard boxes and even large rocks. I figured they were escaping from the pillows on their beds.

After a few weeks we found, back in Christiansted, a cool house on Hill Street, to which we moved. The view of the bay from the front screened porch was as breathtaking as the long climb up the front steps. The multicolored waters of the shimmering bay, the glowing greens of the S-shaped channel that pierced the treacherous coral reef, and the handsome blue of the open sea beyond the reef never failed to thrill us. We enjoyed watching the Bull Line steamer or the sailing sloops come zigzagging through the channel.

Our water for drinking and cooking came from a cistern in the backyard, supplied with rainwater caught on our roof. It had to be hand-pumped into the service tank inside the house by means of a small pump. At the most inopportune moments the tank was apt to go dry, and someone would have to hurry to the backyard and pump about 500 strokes to refill it. It was time-consuming but excellent exercise.

During our stay on Hill Street our daughter Deede (Delia) formed a friendship with two Puerto Rican girls about her age who lived across the street. It was there that she first began to learn Spanish. She loved to go to their beautiful colonial home to play. She must have overstayed her welcome, for one day the lady of the house turned on her suddenly and snapped, "If you come over to this house one more time, I will cut your head off!"



Deede came home terrified. I can't recall that she ever went there again to play. Anyway, about this time we made our final move. It was to a simple, stone cottage on Beeston Hill, a pleasant knoll just outside Christiansted—with the alternating current that our equipment required. It was no more expensive than the house in town, and considerably cooler. Our equipment arrived safely from the States.

Our mission work was advancing, with friendships forming throughout the town, and souls seeking God at our altars. Life was at last settling into a workable routine. Our children began to study the Calvert Correspondence School courses with their mother. Our first halting steps were over and we were catching our stride. It felt wonderful to have a place in the life of the Virgin Islands.

## CHAPTER 9

# *ADVENTURE ON THE SEA*

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In our early days on St. Croix we used to buy fish from Brother William DeGrasse, one of our lay preachers who made his living by running a string of fish traps along the outer reef of Jerusalem Bay, one of the turquoise bays along St. Croix's south shore. Returning from his inspection of the fish traps, Brother De (as he was called to express affection as well as for brevity's sake) and his son Joe, always his helper on these trips, would stop along the highway at the foot of Beeston Hill where we lived. Brother De would blow a long, trumpet-like tone on the conch shell he always carried in the cart. Though our house was half a mile away we could hear the conch horn quite plainly. I would drive down the hill in my old Chevie to buy some fresh fish. Brother De was always very generous and gave us about as much fish as he sold to us.

It occurred to me that the DeGrasse boat might hold a third party, so I asked Brother De if I could go along sometime. The next week I was up at three o'clock one morning to accompany the fishermen to Jerusalem Bay. I had noticed that Brother De always had two cart animals along—one hitched to the cart and the other trot-

ting alongside. He explained that neither animal was strong enough to pull the cart on the round trip, so he made them take turns. Whichever pulled the cart to the bay got to walk beside the cart on the trip home.

By dawn we had reached the bay, staked out the animals to feed, and had loaded our gear into the rowboat. It was a relief to shove off and head for the open sea to escape the clouds of sand flies that set upon us viciously. They were almost too small to see but they delivered a sudden burning sting. Swarms of mosquitoes completed the trial.

I observed something impressive about Brother De's devotional habits. It was his custom to pray just as he shoved the boat off from the shore. Every time I went to sea with Brother De, I heard his sailor's prayer. It went something like this: "Lord, we commit ourselves to Thee as we go out to sea. Protect us and bring us safely back to shore. In Jesus' name. Amen." It never varied and it was always answered.

When he returned to land he prayed again, always the same little prayer of thanksgiving, just before he leaped from the boat to shore. It went like this: "Lord, we thank Thee for bringing us safely back to land. In Jesus' name. Amen."

I like praying fishermen. Brother De's prayers were oral but so quietly said that I hardly noticed them at first. But repeated fishing trips made me aware of this beautiful little devotional habit.

Back to our trip. As we neared deeper water we watched for floats of bamboo which marked the location of the fish traps, set 20 to 40 feet deep. These traps, also called fish pots, were roughly 18 inches high and four feet square, and came to a point at the side opposite the entrance. They were constructed either of wire mesh reinforced with small poles or of fine laths woven in loose, basket-like fashion. Fish entered through a funnel-shaped opening to get at the special grass bait or

tasty fish scraps within. The traps were drawn up by means of a rope attached to the bamboo floats. It was a man-size job to lift a heavy trap out of the water and balance it across one end of the boat. The traps caught such fish as snapper, grouper, grunt, bluefish, parrot fish, squirrel fish, angel fish, and bread-and-butter fish.

One trap drawn up contained a three-foot eel. Brother De was very careful to kill it with a metal bar before he drew it out of the trap and threw it back into the sea. Some people ate them but Brother De knew that they were often poisonous, so he would not take the risk of selling them. He also respected the eel's needlelike teeth and slippery, writhing agility. He claimed that an eel could easily saw a man's hand off.

One trap was crushed and empty. Brother De said a shark had torn it up trying to get at the fish caught inside. The other traps brought some reward, and provided two large tubs full of fish to sell. About every three days Brother De thus went to sea to inspect his fish traps, the weather permitting.

I happened to be along on another journey to the sea when in the early morning darkness we came upon a human body lying at the edge of the highway. At first we were not even sure that it was a person, for our kerosene lantern gave out only a very dim light. Brother De was hesitant to stop, but I felt that we should, in case we could give aid. The little cart pulled over to the shoulder of the road and we walked back to the still figure. It was a small Puerto Rican man apparently in a drunken stupor. Lest he get run over by a passing automobile, we pulled him off the highway and well over to the shoulder. Just then a car came along and we hailed the driver, who was headed toward Christiansted. We asked him to report the case to the police station. The driver promised to do so, and we continued our trip to the bay.

Many years later Brother De reminded me of this incident. I had forgotten about it, but not Brother De. He



smiled as he recounted, "You said that if you didn't go back to that man in the road you would never again be able to preach about the Good Samaritan."

On one trip to the sea we fished with heavy hand-lines at 400-feet depth. We used stones as weights to carry the bait to the bottom. I was barely able to detect the strike of the fish below, so great was the depth. As we hauled in red snapper their eyes protruded and their air sacs came out at their mouths as they reached water areas of unaccustomed, lesser pressure.

Soon we found only fish heads attached to our hooks. Sharks had found our fishing ground and were eating all our fish as fast as we could hook them. Brother De said we might as well move, for the sharks would not leave us alone. We tried another place about a hundred yards away, but here too the sharks spoiled our fishing. Brother De decided to head for shore. There was nothing else to do when sharks began snipping the snappers.

On the way back I was somewhat startled to see a long dorsal fin cutting the water as some large fish made for our boat. When it was within 30 feet, I saw that it was a vicious hammerhead shark. What a sight! Our boat was at least 12 feet long and the fish was as long as the boat. It had eyes set out on the end of a head which was shaped like a mechanic's hammer. Underneath this grotesque head grinned a great, wide mouth armed with triple rows of barbed, razor-edged teeth. I was somewhat relieved when the shark turned and swam away. But my relief was short-lived, for within a few seconds it veered abruptly and charged rapidly toward us again. Then it went away for good.

During this performance the gentlemen at the oars fell into a deep silence and bent to their oars. Conversation was at a low ebb. In my heart I felt free to call on the Lord for His protection. The fact that I'm writing this book is evidence that He answered my prayer.

## CHAPTER 10

# PROBLEMS OF ADAPTATION

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When I think of all the blunders I made on St. Croix, I am amazed at the kindness and tolerance of the Cruzans. The first Sunday I visited a Sunday school down by the bay in a branch mission. It was a very hot day; at least it seemed so to me. I went to service without a coat. To the dress-conscious Cruzans this was rather shocking. Among ministers it just wasn't done. And the pastor of our main mission kindly informed me of this.

There was always the problem of speech. English is the language of the Virgin Islands. But it is a soft, Creole English with a touch of the Elizabethan era. It takes quite a bit of doing to understand it, let alone speak it. Any attempt to use it in the ordinary Cruzan manner is apt to sound like one is ridiculing. Many times we did not understand the English of our people, but they claimed they could understand us perfectly from the first.

It is strange how ordinary English words can throw you if the accent is relocated. *Syllable* becomes syl-lab-

le. *Maria* becomes *mar-ia*. *Difficulty* is pronounced *dif-fi-cul-ty*; and *iniquity*, *in-i-qui-ty*. When neighbors warned us about the "evening jew," we wondered who he was. We learned they were talking about the night dew. Often V's receive a W sound, as "wictory" and "fruit of the wine."

An American on a neighboring island had difficulty understanding an islander with whom he was trying to converse. A second islander offered this solution: "Talk book English, man; don't talk bush English!"

The uniqueness and freshness of thought forms never ceases to be interesting and rewarding. Two ladies of the church were talking together and one said, "I often say, 'Thank God for God!'"

"Yes, and I say," volunteered the second lady, " 'Thank You, Jesus, for You.' "

Speaking of self-pity, during a testimony meeting one of the good ladies said: "I know a neighbor who thought she the only one who had trouble. She always say, 'Why I the only one who have so much trouble?' She all the time go to the why."

Another sister remarking about the followers of Jehovah's Witnesses said, "They foolin' with a rock with no honey in it!"

In Creole different rules of grammar prevail. When I asked the high school janitor whether he was really the janitor, he replied with dignity, "Ah is."

A good sister testified, "I praising the Lord tonight because He saved a wretch like I."

A happy brother rejoiced in the salvation he had found: "Jesus took up my sins and threw them in the sea of forgotfulness."

A weightier problem was that of learning how to deal with people. The Lord used a 15-year-old boy to show us a few things. Early in our residence on Hill Street we began to have a "star boarder." We shall call



him Peter Deeter, for his real name rhymed something like this. Peter went to school in Christiansted, but lived several miles out of town with his grandparents on Estate Peter's Rest. His grandparents were members of our church.

One Wednesday afternoon Peter came to the house and announced that his grandparents had instructed him to stay at our home until evening prayer meeting, after which he was to return home with them as usual. It sounded logical, though we wondered why the grandparents had not mentioned the arrangement to us personally. Peter had his evening meal with us, eating heartily. We were glad to see that he liked our food. And he made himself useful around the place. He pumped the water tank clear full.

In less than a week Peter Deeter was back. He said his grandparents wanted him to come by to see whether he could help us in any way. The tank needed filling, so he set to work on the long 500 strokes to fill it. He hung around until suppertime and ate with us again. After supper he left early, for he "remembered a way to get home," he said.

Wednesday afternoon came, and so did Peter. There was the same story and the same routine as the week before—pumping, supper, church—except that Peter seemed a trifle less quick to accept tasks presented. He seemed to take unusual interest in all our possessions about the house.

That evening we had fried fish for supper. It seemed quite bony to me, and I left a fair amount of meat on the pile of bones on my plate.

"Are you going to throw that meat away?" asked Peter unbelievably. "Please let me have it; I can master the bones."

Whereupon he set the plate of meat and bones before him, shoved his chair a little farther from the table.

bent low to meet his plate, and set to work. There was created before our amazed eyes a veritable chain belt of entering fish and exiting bones. A neat pile of clean bones grew upon his plate as the fish meat scraps disappeared. Never had we witnessed such uninhibited efficiency! Peter Deeter, the fish-bone eater!

About this time the national pastor came to me asking how it was that everybody in town knew just what we had in our house. Had Peter Deeter been around our place? Peter was, it seemed, one of the strongest branches of the local "grapevine" system. Yes, I said, Peter had been around several times in fact. The pastor looked alarmed, his eyes growing visibly larger. Something was wrong, he told us, and warned us to be careful.

So very soon after that we had a little conference with Peter's grandparents.

"Do you mean to say," his incredulous grandmother exclaimed, "that you people never asked for Peter's help at your place?"

"No, we never did," we answered, beginning to see the light.

"Why, all this time we have needed Peter at home," they stated, "but he kept telling us that the missionaries were begging for his help at their house."

It was further revealed that Peter had stayed in town a number of times when he never came to our house at all. But this brief meeting of the G.M.A. (Grandparents-Missionary Association) marked the end of Peter's visits. Peter Deeter's pumping permit promptly expired.

Right here I would like to say that our Cruzan Nazarenes were a very courteous, respectful, and considerate folk. It was a delight to work among them. They never imposed upon us and great was their kindness. We had every reason to believe that they loved us, as we loved them.

However, we were not through our course in adaptation yet, for Peter Deeter cut yet more capers.

It was the custom of our church to hold Friday night street meetings at various places about the town, especially in that lower area of the town near the sea, called Water Gut. Usually I attended, as well as Peter's grandparents. But one Friday evening neither of us attended. Peter did, however, for it was one of those times that he stayed in town instead of going home on the school bus. Under the direction of Brother DeGrasse's strong voice and rhythmic tambourine, the song service developed a lively spirit. Peter stepped forth into the uncertain light of the kerosene torch and offered an unscheduled jig on the evening's program. The singing stopped and he was requested to behave himself. He merely moved slightly out of the elders' reach and continued to dance in loose-jointed merriment. There was a mixed reaction of shock and amusement, depending on whether it originated in the church members or the bystanders.

Subsequent events showed us how we could expect to gather much of the local news. The offended church members did not go directly to the grandparents to report Peter's misdemeanor, but they waited until the elders were present Sunday night, then acted. Innocently enough, I called on Brother Brown to lead in prayer. He was a new Christian and needed some spiritual exercise, didn't he?

After dispensing with the usual prayer amenities, he launched forth upon the theme that burdened his heart.

"O Lord, You know how badly Peter acted at the street meeting last Friday night!"

Up to this point there had been numerous amens and expressions of prayer-accompaniment, but from here on there was a great silence. The waiting congregation hung upon Brother Brown's every word.



"Lord, You know how Peter disgraced our church by dancing on the street while we sang! And how he refused to mind when Brother De rebuked him. We pray that Thou wilt bring Peter to repentance. Forgive him, Lord," Brother Brown prayed.

The prayer finally ended and the silent congregation arose from its knees. There was a hurt look on the faces of the grandparents. There was a haunted look on Peter's face. It was a little hard to go on smoothly with the service. At the close of the meeting there was a special session of the G.G.A. (Grandparents-Grandson Association) down the street in the dark. It lasted quite a while. When Peter reappeared he wore a very solemn and chastened look.

We thought all crises had passed. But, no, Brother Brown ushered in a new one. One night during testimony service Brother Brown addressed himself publicly to me and asked, "Brother Prescott, what do you think of church members who will not speak to each other?"

Without waiting for me to remark upon the regrettableness of such a situation among the brethren, the oracle plunged on, revealing that the matter lay between two sisters of the church.

"My wife and Sister Green have had a fuss," he informed the congregation. Both ladies in question were seated in the church at that very moment. There was no visible joy upon their countenances.

Brother Brown proceeded with his message. "My wife's chickens got into Mrs. Green's garden, and they fussed about it. And now they won't speak to each other. Pastor, I think you ought to speak to these two women, for church members ought not to act this way toward each other."

I assured the good brother that we would tend to the matter, and I requested prayer for our members, that all might be able to get along peaceably in the spirit of

Christian charity. I really felt that Brother Brown himself needed as much help as anybody. He certainly had a knack for imparting knowledge without wisdom.

God gave us increasing love for these spiritually needy people. Their problems were many, but as one can see, not too hidden. It was God's love that made the work both appealing and rewarding. It was good to be enrolled in the School of Humanity. We were learning. Yes, how we were learning things!

## CHAPTER 11

### *NEEDY HEARTS*

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The little amusing things that happened along the way helped to lighten the burdens and lessen the strain, but they could not hide the great need in the hearts all around us. With each new revelation of need came a fresh assurance that the grace of God was the basic solution to the problems of the Virgin Islands—as it was for the needs of the whole world.

Peter Deeter, with all his tricks, was at heart just a needy boy. He had been abandoned by both his parents. This world seemed very insecure and unlovely to him. Had it not been for his compassionate grandparents, he would have been cast out upon the world. At nights he was afraid to walk home alone in the dark. There were jumbies and evil spirits about, he said. In his thinking, they were real and fearful beings. He had no practical trust in Christ. He had never yet entered into the rest and workableness of Christianity.

Even the grown-ups who battled with carnality and small-mindedness were like selfish little children. Dear



Brother Brown! What a time he was always having! Within two weeks after his marriage he was in trouble. This time he told on himself.

"I've had words with my wife!" he announced glumly as he arose one Sunday night to testify. "She said something this week that I did not like. I told her to hush, but she would not hush. I became very vexed and struck her."

That night when I gave the altar call both the Browns came to the altar and asked God for His forgiveness. Then they turned to each other and asked for pardon. There followed a sweet reconciliation such as I had seldom seen.

My wife soon organized a sewing circle in the missionary society with the purpose of sewing for the needy. The ladies were elated to receive the gift of a fine needle each. They made a nice assortment of clothing for the poor. Then they asked, "Who is poorer than we?" And they kept the clothing for themselves.

Not all the temporal needs were limited to the ladies. There was an old alcoholic named Ruben Joseph (not his real name) who came to church one Sunday at our Hill Street chapel. When he went to the altar he seemed very broken up and repentant. He put his head clear down on the floor and asked God to forgive his sins. He was an ugly old fellow with only two or three long, yellow fangs left, but when he smiled big he looked not too bad. After he prayed through at the altar, he grinned happily.

I called on Ruben at his humble little stone cottage in an ancient Danish courtyard. I found him sitting out in the sunshine pounding long leaves of snake plant in preparation for weaving the dried fibers into doormats, rugs, or horse collars. He seemed very happy to see me and invited me into his place. There were no chairs to sit on: just a set of old swayback springs and a large

sheet of brown wrapping paper in which he wrapped himself at nights. I asked him whether he was cold at nights and he answered that he always slept cold.

I could not rest in my mind until I had gone home and collected a number of things for old Ruben. I took him some bedding and a little pillow, a few dishes, and some simple silverware. He gave me a couple of door-mats in exchange, so he wouldn't appear to be a beggar. We had prayer together in his one-room house before I left.

A week or so later I called on Ruben again. All his bedding was gone, as well as everything else I had given him! He said, shamefacedly, that he had backslidden, and while he was drunk his neighbors had come in and stolen all his things. A fellow Cruzan, however, suggested to me that just as likely the craving for drink had mastered Ruben and he had sold the things to get a little ready cash to buy rum.

Be that as it may, his case was pitiable and his end was tragic. We learned shortly after leaving the Virgin Islands for Cuba that old Ruben had gotten drunk in town, and had fallen and struck his head against the cement curb. He had died within an hour.

The white people on the island were needy too. The wife of a prominent businessman called on us, and we sensed that loneliness and lack of fellowship could constitute as painful a need as lack of food or worldly goods. She told us how her missionary parents who had served their denomination in Africa had once come to St. Croix to visit her. They were shocked at the great spiritual need of the Cruzans. Somehow they felt that work here would be considerably harder than in Africa itself.

Great need could be experienced also by missionaries. We became acquainted with various ministers of other churches, among them a young couple with a small son named Tommy. One day as the family drove

across the island Tommy fell out the back window of the station wagon onto the highway. He was rushed to the hospital and given treatment, then put to bed for observation. But the observation was not quite enough. Tommy climbed up the side of the child's bed, lost his balance, and pitched out onto the hard tile floor, landing on his head. He died a few minutes later. It was a tragic loss for this couple. Their church soon transferred them to a different field, so they could get away from the scene of their great sorrow.

Our hearts were deeply stirred by the need of the Cruzans. Most of them simply did not know God. Although most of them were nominally affiliated with some church, for it was considered a great disgrace to be buried outside the church, it was not considered shameful to be a church member and live in sin.

When we appealed to the people to accept Christ and follow a life of moral purity, one person cited the case of a prominent, wealthy, American businessman who lived on the island in open immorality. The reasoning seemed to be: If the big American can get by, why should the little people bother about conforming to Bible standards? I answered that the claims of the gospel were not based on the life of any one American, nor upon the general standards of America as a whole, but rather upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Judge of all men. We had not come to preach Americanism, but to declare the gospel of Christ. There was no escaping the commandments of a holy God. His grace could go deeper than the stain of sin had gone!

How great it is to represent something as sound as the gospel, as big as the Church, and as satisfying as Jesus!



## CHAPTER 12

# *CHURCH SERVICES WITH A DIFFERENCE*

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As I recall, our early Cruzan church services severely taxed the patience of my children. Even for me they seemed a little too long sometimes. I expect that we had grown accustomed to too brief a program in the United States. To these people, however, six songs in a service were alright if they were lively and conveyed blessing to the soul. And six prayers were fine if they went past mere formality and touched God.

We experienced some strange distractions in our services. The children used to watch green lizards hunt insects around the ceiling lights of the church at night. And the next-door neighbor kept a donkey close to our mission. It gave me some dreadful competition Sunday mornings. It was hard to compete against the raucous agony of its seesaw braying.

One time I was preaching at Lower Bethlehem Village, near the airport. My first seeker in that community had come to the altar at my invitation. I urged him to pray while he knelt beside a bench. I was very anxious to see him find God. Suddenly something nipped



me on the ankle. I diverted my attention from the seeker to my limb and found a small centipede chewing me. I brushed the vermin off, then returned to my seeker. But he was gone! He had taken advantage of my slight inattention to slip away. I've never liked centipedes!

But one time a centipede helped me to gain attention. I was preaching in a Sunday afternoon service in Castle Cokley Village at our palm-arbor chapel. The preacher always stood close to an old wall that formed one end of the meeting place. During my message I began to notice that I enjoyed better than usual attention. In fact, every eye was upon me. Suddenly a lady walked up to me, slipped off one of her shoes, and gave a mighty wallop to something on the wall just behind my head. I turned to see what was the matter. There was a six-inch centipede making calculations on how to get over to my neck. The lady changed its mind by removing its head. It took me several minutes to get back to my subject, and frankly I think that many in my congregation never did make it.

Then there was our Christiansted bay-side branch Sunday school where the problem was fleas. The flooring of the place was of wood and the cracks between the boards formed a natural hiding place. Those fleas could jump the highest and bite the hardest of all the fleas I've ever entertained. Any teaching or message delivered at that place had to be good to overcome the distraction created by the fleas.

I recall our Friday night street meetings in Christiansted. with our only light a smoky little kerosene torch from a tin can set in a pole, the atmosphere was sometimes more fitting for a Halloween party than a religious service. It was a good thing that most of our people could sing the hymns from memory, for it was no place to try to read. Even when we chose a street corner with an overhead electric light, the illumination was weak because of the feeble current provided by the di-

rect-current system. But it was a thrill to preach to hungry hearts out in the wind and the night, as Jesus and Paul must have done many times.

Very soon after our arrival on St. Croix, I advertised a revival meeting at our little church on Hill Street. Attendance was good and the Lord gave us both new converts and new members. I recall the first Sunday morning of this special meeting. I had planned to preach several sermons before making an altar call, thinking to work up to the invitation, as I had often seen it done in evangelistic campaigns in new places in the United States. Consequently I made no altar call at the close of my first sermon. Just before I called for the prayer of dismissal, somebody wrote a note and sent it up to me by a little boy. It read: "Please give an invitation. There is somebody who wants to come to the altar."

I quickly made an altar call and a young man came readily to the altar. He was quite broken up and prayed earnestly. In a few minutes he prayed through. There was great rejoicing among the Christians. And I think I began to learn an important lesson: Don't be bound down by ministerial traditions; be open for happy surprises.

During that campaign we became acquainted with a woman who seemed interested in the message of the Church of the Nazarene, though not fully persuaded. She was somewhat set against the idea of repentance and seeking at the altar. She was already a member of another church and she argued that this fact should provide all the spiritual security she needed. She readily admitted that her many children could claim different fathers, but that seemed to her to be a small matter. She was incensed at any suggestion that her daughters, beginning to follow closely in her footsteps, were sinners. It made me wonder what the local ministry had been teaching its parishioners. I concluded that there was indeed room for the Church of the Nazarene in the Virgin Islands.

## MONEY MATTERS

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*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:10).*

I believe firmly that giving money cheerfully to the Lord is a means of joyful worship. I have always found such giving a source of blessing to my own heart. Consequently I have not been inclined to deny to the nationals of the fields where I have worked this distinct and unique blessing. I believe that generosity is one of the fruits to expect from the life of holiness.

It is possible to baby our national Christians by our reticence in asking them to give until they tend to feel that they are too poor to give. When coddled financially, their perspective is damaged, and they come to feel that a very small offering, compared with their giving potential, is an ample expression of generosity toward God and His work.



In countries dominated by Catholicism, national workers sometimes argue that the evangelical work should go a long, long time at first before any offerings are ever taken in a public service. They feel that an early offering will give the impression that evangelicals, also, are chiefly interested in the people's money. They fear that an offering, in effect, says: We are not interested in your soul but in what material gain we can get out of you.

Sometimes there crops up among the nationals the argument that they should not be expected to give sacrificially because America is so rich, and Nazarenes there ought to supply all the needed finances or the greater part of them. Clearly, this attitude would militate against self-support and would retard the progress of the fields toward an indigenous status.

Fortunately, I have not found any of these negative attitudes to be dominant on any of the fields where I have worked. Their expression has been minimal. It is usual, and completely normal, for holiness people to be generous. "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8).

Nazarenes on an island like St. Croix might be tempted to feel that they are a very small part of a small movement. It is their study of world missions, their vision of the great spiritual need around the world, and their opportunity to give to the cause of world evangelism through the ever-expanding ministry of the Church of the Nazarene that saves them from minimizing their worth and disparaging their offerings. Through their offerings they see themselves as taking the gospel to multitudes whom they will never meet personally in this life. It brings to them a rewarding sense of fulfillment. It protects them from thinking small.

Besides all this, our Nazarenes on St. Croix, like those on many other fields, look at the lovely church in

which they worship and say, "We will never be able to match the giving of the brethren in the homeland that made this church possible. But we will give our best, and we will tithe our incomes, to express our gratitude to God and His people. Now that we have this church plant, we will operate it at our best for the Kingdom interests."

Our Cruzan Nazarenes enjoy giving. That is why they were a 17 percent church last year, and why they are striving to be a 20 percent church this year.

Whenever there is a big missionary offering coming up, our people prepare ahead of time for it. It seems to be a general practice that whenever anybody in the church finds money he puts it in his Alabaster box. I think that started when I found a \$10.00 bill in the middle of the street in front of the post office. It had been run over by many cars and it was barely recognizable. The Lord must have guided my eyes that day. Into the cause of world missions the money went.

One morning as I arrived at Sunday school with a load of people from my early bus run, I observed that a car had just run over and killed a dog in the street where all our cars would have to pass. It looked reasonable to get the dog out of the intersection, so I asked the two junior boys in the front seat of the bus beside me to haul the dog off. They were too squeamish and quietly refused to undertake the job. So I walked out into the street, picked up the dog, and started to take it off into a pasture. Suddenly I stopped, for there in the street nearby was a fresh one-dollar bill. I disposed of the dog and took the dollar bill to show the boys who were afraid to help me. The dollar went quickly into my Alabaster box.

I learned that neighbors were intrigued by my simple arrangements of fan coral and seashells glued on ceiling tiles. Each tile brought from one to three dollars

(U.S.). The fun of beachcombing was doubled when the proceeds went to world missions.

There were two young men in the church who loved to fish, so we vied with one another in our recreational time to see who could catch the most fish to sell for his missionary offering. At 40 to 55 cents a pound, it mounted up quite fast for the Kingdom.

Brother DeGrasse had a refrigerator, gift of a prospering son. His neighbors did not have one. So Brother De made ice cubes and sold them at a penny each to his neighbors. They seemed to be more eager to buy from him when they learned that the proceeds went to the church missionary offerings. Brother De could not hold all the pennies in his Alabaster box, so he kept them in a coffee can. When our treasurer counted his can of pennies, it came to \$20.00.

There was an elderly lady named Sister Walters in our Christiansted church. (She is still with us.) Her health was not very good and she found it difficult to undertake extra jobs. Still her heart was burdened for missions and she longed to do something special for the Alabaster box opening. Her line of work was to keep small children in her home, as a day-care center, while their mothers worked. She went to prayer and asked God to give her an extra child to care for, so she would have something beyond her expenses to put into the Alabaster box. Almost at once an American gentleman came to her door and asked her to assume the care of his baby, for he and his wife needed to make a trip on which they could not take the little one. Sister Walters reported with hilarity, "I've named the child my Alabaster baby!" When it came time to open the boxes, her Alabaster offering came to \$42.00. How happy she was!

Nazarenes are wonderfully alike everywhere—they love to give. They believe with a beautiful, childlike faith that they cannot outgive God. And they can't.



## CHAPTER 14

# *THE RISING SUN*

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Now and then one sees a sunrise so beautiful that it glows within the memory long after the day that gave it place has passed. I saw such a sunrise over the Caribbean Sea one morning while fishing with Brother De-Grasse. Before the sun was up, we were well out on the sea in his "oarsmobile." The early sun was smothered on the horizon in a bank of clouds. A burst of long, pink tapers fanned out across the pale blue sky. The clouds turned to fairy mounds of molten rose. Then with mystic grace their mounting curves and folds resolved in turn to coral, gold, canary yellow, cream, ivory, then snowy white. All the while these glories brightened the glassy sea. The illimitable dome of sky hovered over the cobalt depths, showering its wealth of lights upon the reflective face of the deep. God's lovely lights portrayed His creative ingenuity with exquisite charm and power. I forgot all about fishing until the heavens had melted into the quiet blue of settled day.

Of one thing I was sure: If God would deign to honor the Virgin Islands with so rich a heritage of natural

beauty, He also waited to bless its people with a greater revelation of spiritual light—Jesus, the light of the world. We had a right to expect from heaven a demonstration of the glory of God in the hearts of men. With this faith we labor on.

After being away from St. Croix for 12 years, I returned for a brief scouting trip, following our assignment to Puerto Rico. I was not under official direction in my trip, but I could not give up my faith that someday the Nazarenes would again plant their banners in the Virgin Islands.

As I climbed into a taxi at the airport preparing to be driven to Christiansted, the driver asked, "Aren't you Rev. Prescott?"

"Yes, I am," I replied. "How did you remember me?"

"You gave my wife an autographed New Testament when she was a girl in your Sunday school," he replied. "After we were married I was drafted into the army and sent to the South Pacific. My wife sent your New Testament along with me. And I still have it," he concluded.

It seemed to me in that moment in the taxi that I could see the spiritual sun coming up over St. Croix.

Recently in San Juan, Puerto Rico, I met an American sea captain who had a crew of sailors hired in the Virgin Islands. He was discouraged over their sinful way of living, and he wondered whether there was any hope for them. Yes, there is hope, but only through Christ, I told him.

I remembered a little Cruzan boy named Wilfred DeGrasse who came to my altar and found God. He stayed true to God and proved through his youth to be a dependable Christian. Later he joined the U.S. Navy, improved his education, and served with great credit. Today he has the rank of chief yeoman. He felt the call of God to preach and across the years of reenlistment he has continued preaching. In three years he will retire

from the navy and return to St. Croix to live. There will be one more dependable worker for God on the island then, one more demonstration that God can be greatly honored in a Cruzan. I can see the sun rising higher over the Virgin Islands.

When others lose hope, my memory returns to Brother and Sister Abraham Sweeney and their godly steadfastness. In my mind's eye I see them driving their pony cart every Sunday afternoon to hold Sunday school and preaching service at the country village of Castle Cokley. They conducted services under a simple palm-thatch arbor by an old Danish wall.

Until illness cut them down they never slackened in their labor of love. They knew that while they were gone from home some of their neighbors might come in to steal a chicken or a goat, but they went out to preach anyway. And if they went to town by bus to attend our mission services, they knew that someone might steal the wheels off their pony cart if they did not chain them securely to the house. But they also knew that if Jesus had not come into their hearts they too might have followed the pattern of petty thievery and loose living so common among their neighbors. The knowledge of a divine miracle of grace wrought in their hearts impelled them to go out, without salary, and witness for Christ. They had caught a vision of the sun rising over St. Croix.



## CHAPTER 15

# THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

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*And he [Joshua] spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land (Josh. 4:21-22).*

When, after an absence of 16 years, we returned to establish a Nazarene work in the Virgin Islands, we decided to keep a daily journal. Also we kept notes for a record entitled "Days of Special Significance in Our Virgin Islands Work." From these records I share such data as would help you to feel the movement and progress of our church on St. Croix.

*Thur., July 27, 1961.* We, Rev. and Mrs. Lyle Prescott, Elwood, and Ruth, boarded the S.S. "George Lykes" at Galveston, Tex., to sail to San Juan, Puerto Rico, then to transship to the Virgin Islands. We had just completed our 1960-'61 year of furlough in the States.

*Thur., Aug. 3, 1961.* We landed at San Juan, P.R., to spend three weeks with our missionaries, including time spent scouting for a home in the Virgin Islands.

*Mon., Aug. 7, 1961.* Grace and I flew to the island of St. Thomas (60 miles east of San Juan) to find a house to rent. We had no success. We prayed and felt led to try St. Croix, 40 miles south, where we had contacts and where our church had had a mission in 1945. St. Thomas, true, was the capital island, but St. Croix still tugged at our hearts, is a larger island, and has an equal population.

*Wed., Aug. 9, 1961.* We found a new house in Christiansted about to be vacated by its renters. We found the owner and rented the house, occupancy to be granted by the time we can ship our effects over from Puerto Rico. Praise the Lord! We now have a base from which to begin our missionary work. In how many lands have we gone through this process! But always with a fresh thrill.

*Tues., Aug. 22, 1961.* Our little missionary family flew via Caribair from San Juan to St. Croix. At last we feel we have arrived in the Virgin Islands. Our missionary adventure is really begun! We found our house empty and clean, but no furniture yet available from the boat. So we spent the night in the Rosedale Guest House, three blocks away. (We received our car and furniture safely the next day.)

*Sun., Aug. 27, 1961.* We drove into the country to explore. On Estate Catherine's Rest, Grace's attention was attracted to a Puerto Rican lady sitting in her yard among her children, and she asked me to back up to inquire of the woman. The lady invited us to hold services in her front room. This is our first service invitation. We feel it is an opening from the Lord.

*Sun., Sept. 3, 1961.* We returned to the Puerto Rican lady's home in Est. Catherine's Rest and conducted an afternoon gospel service in Spanish, our first Cruzan service in this adventure for God. There were 29 present, of all ages. There was very good attention.

Today we visited with a West Indian young man from Antigua. He is a furniture maker. He believes in the message of holiness and seems to have a good Christian experience. He would like to assist us on a part-time, non-salaried basis. He sings, plays the autoharp, and speaks quite well. God is supplying our needs.

*Tues., Sept. 5, 1961.* Our children, Woody and Ruth, enrolled in the public high school. When they, and one other white student, were introduced by the principal in the assembly, they were openly booed and laughed at by the student body. Afterwards students formed chains across the corridors and refused to let them pass. Our children wanted to return alone at once to the States to attend high school. We had quite a bit of praying and talking to do with them. (The children rallied and eventually made many friends. Both of them joined the high school band. In her junior year, Ruth was elected vice-president of the student body.)

Today our landlady gave us permission to hold religious services in her rented house. This is an answer to prayer.

*Fri., Sept. 8, 1961.* Today we received a letter from the government of the Virgin Islands in St. Thomas recognizing me as a minister, and granting me official permission to perform civil ceremonies (baptisms, weddings, and funerals) in the Virgin Islands. This is a real step of progress. Thank God!

*Sun., Sept. 10, 1961.* This morning at 10:30 we conducted our first service in Christiansted. Those coming to our house were all Puerto Ricans, so we conducted the service in Spanish. There were only 12 present, but it was a beginning!

Tonight 12 people attended our first English-speaking service. Sister DeGrasse attended, but Brother De was ill. I preached on "Called to Holiness" and felt the Lord helping me.



*Sat., Sept. 16, 1961.* This morning I agreed to rent "Ebenezer Cottage," a roomy house in the Richmond section of Christiansted as a parsonage-chapel combination. We feel that it is a much better location than our present house, situated clear to the east side of town. The rent is slightly higher but everything is "very dear" in the Virgin Islands.

*Sun., Sept. 24, 1961.* Tonight we had the blessed experience of praying with our first altar seekers. They were three brothers, and the oldest one seemed to be very earnest and to receive help.

*Sun., Oct. 15, 1961.* We opened work at the village of Upper Bethlehem. Open-air services in the center of the village had 30 and 50 attendance, respectively, at the start.

*Sun. to Sun., Oct. 29 to Nov. 5, 1961.* I conducted my first evangelistic campaign in our new parsonage-chapel in the Richmond section of Christiansted. The total attendance was only 155 but the Lord gave us 10 altar seekers and many hearts were touched. It is plain to see that gospel work in the Virgin Islands is going to be slow and hard, and it is going to require patience and long-range planning.

*Sun., Nov. 5, 1961.* We conducted our first service among the old folks of the Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged at King's Hill. They seemed very appreciative. (We have provided special services and treats at Christmastime. Through the years, with general regularity, we have offered a service at the Home every other Sunday afternoon, with Brother DeGrasse in charge.)

*Sat., Nov. 11, 1961.* We attended the thirteenth Annual District Assembly of Puerto Rico, accepting a General Budget of \$30.00 and a District Budget of \$25.00. Our Thanksgiving missionary offering came to exactly \$30.00. (In 1969 the Golden Rock church is giving over \$800 to world missions.)

*Fri., Feb. 16, 1962.* In the afternoon Bill Porter, my D.S., and I gave a French horn-piano concert at the Christiansted Elementary School, with attendance of 300. On Thursday, Bill had conducted a class for the high school band. It was all fine publicity for the Church of the Nazarene.

*Sun., March 25, 1962.* We opened a mission in the west-side town of Frederiksted in a rented house. We received into church membership Rodwell and Elva Buckley of Antigua, who will serve as our national pastors there. They are our first Nazarenes on St. Croix in this new missionary venture.

*Wed., June 6, 1962.* I held my first chapel service at the Richmond Penitentiary, the Virgin Islands prison, in Christiansted at 4:30 p.m. There were eight inmates and a guard present. The prison has about 40 inmates. The men expressed gratitude for two things: that I was not a Jehovah's Witness, and that I would come every Wednesday afternoon. (I continued services here for four years until my furlough. God gave us several genuine conversions and one church member from this work.)

*Tues., Oct. 23, 1962.* Climaxing a constant search for suitable church property, we now have an acre of land in Estate Golden Rock, Christiansted. This is our first property in the Virgin Islands. Always before we have rented. Our four lots totaling 93 percent of an acre cost \$12,500. The down payment of \$500 came from our local church funds. (On May 27, 1963, I purchased for the General Board an adjoining lot for \$2,750. Again, the down payment of \$600 was supplied by the local congregation. The current real-estate boom in the Virgin Islands is such that an acre of land across the street from our property is now, seven years later, for sale at \$60,000.)

*Sun., March 21, 1965.* Today we celebrated the dedication of our new church in Golden Rock. Mrs. V. H. Lewis sang "Bless This House"; the St. Croix Community

Chorus sang three beautiful numbers; District Superintendent William Porter conducted the Act of Dedication; and General Superintendent V. H. Lewis preached the dedicatory sermon. There were 300 in attendance. The property was dedicated free of debt. Praise God for a church home at last!

*Mid-June, 1965.* Our new parsonage, an Alabaster building, was completed and we were, by gradual stages, moved in. Woody and Ruth were home from Pasadena College for the summer to help us move. The house is located next door to the church, and is of harmonizing design.

*June 6, 1966.* Rev. and Mrs. Carl Mischke arrived to serve as supply missionaries during our state-side furlough. Most happy meeting and blessed fellowship!

*Sat., June 17, 1967.* We returned to St. Croix to begin our second term in the Virgin Islands, after a year's furlough in the States. After whatever absence, we are always glad to get back to St. Croix. It feels like home.

*Fri., July 7, 1967.* Tonight we held a piano dedication service, featuring the 6 ft. 6 in. Yamaha grand piano which I purchased with my deputation funds. About 65 interested people attended to hear a number of island musicians in this service. It gave us access to a number of people who never before attended. I am very grateful for this beautiful instrument, which we dedicated to the service of our King.

*Sun., Aug. 6, 1967.* This afternoon we conducted our first Cruzan baptismal service, baptizing five in a seaside service at Estate Judith's Fancy. Rev. Herbert Ratcliff, director of our Nazarene Bible Institute in San Juan, and currently conducting a revival campaign with us at Golden Rock, assisted me in this service.

*July 22 to Aug. 2, 1968.* We conducted our third summer vacation Bible school. It was our best to date, with 12 on the staff, 186 pupils enrolled, average attendance



of 152, and 86 with perfect attendance. In the final exhibition service, Aug. 4, we set a new Sunday school attendance record of 165. The previous high was 122.

*Feb. 26 to March 2, 1969.* With the evangelistic party of Charles and Jeanie Millhuff, James and Carolyn Bohi we had an excellent revival meeting. The attendance and offerings were the best we have ever seen on St. Croix, and God gave us 68 altar seekers with some real victories. (On March 3, I continued on with the "team" for a Conference on Evangelism in Barbados, followed by two evangelistic campaigns in Guyana, with outstanding victories for Christ.)

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Not all of our starts have proven fruitful. For example, the family that invited us for our very first service on St. Croix, after a month decided they did not care for our doctrines, so declined to let us use their home for further services. However our general direction has been forward.

The island community is becoming aware of the Church of the Nazarene as a sound denomination with a message that is needed. The message of the church has been amplified through frequent radio and television ministries. Additional avenues of service have been opened up through the St. Croix Ministerial Association, Community Chorus, and American Red Cross. Our constant prayer is that Jesus shall so be exalted in our lives and ministry that, when the journal of all our days be finished, there will be sheaves to lay at His feet in heaven!

Thank God for the message of scriptural holiness! Thank God for the Church of the Nazarene through which to proclaim it! Thank God for open doors in the Caribbean in which to declare it! May the next 25 years see His truth go marching on! God is able—in times like these!