

Welcome to Jamaica!

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It was very cute. Good nights were being said. Even that was done in something of a rush, since we were to arise at five in the morning. Jets won't wait at five in the morning. Jets won't wait beyond scheduled departure. "Is there time for one question, Dad?" Sure, what is it? "If a person makes a vow, is he bound to keep it?" Yes, he is. It's like a promise: when you make a promise, you ought to keep it. A Christian must keep his vow, even if it means for him much sacrifice. Yet, if it happened to be a vow to do something wrong, something against the revealed will of God, or something impossible, a man is not bound to keep it. Herod was not bound to keep his vow, even to the point of persecution of the saints, and to murder. The honorable thing for him, in this case would have been to repudiate his vow. Take also for example, a man I once knew who vowed never to marry, if it could not be to one certain girl. That vow was not only foolish, but not according to the will of God and flew in the face of Genesis 2:18 and I Cor. 7:1-9. "Well, ever since that accident...I vowed never to drive a car. Would it then be alright for me to take 'driver's training'? I think it would, Jan. Let's talk about it further in the morning.

The next morning, speeding on to the airport, the conversation returned to this subject, especially in the light of Numbers 30, where the law of vows appears. There it is plain that once a vow is made a man must not break his word. It is also plain from that law that a woman may not make a vow apart from and under the headship of the man. If her father, or her husband, hears the vow and has nothing against it, agrees to it, so allowing it, then she is bound to it, and her vow stands. "But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth (it), not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul. Shall stand; and the Lord shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her." In this case, her father disallowed his daughter in the day that he heard it, which was a considerable time after it had been made, exhorted her to repent of a hasty and ill-conceived vow, and assured her that confessing it to the Lord, "the Lord shall forgive her."...Then with a clear conscience prepare to take "driver's training."

Loving good-byes were excitedly and hurriedly said at the airport. Loved ones and well-wishers waved and watched the DC-9 quickly disappear from sight. Before many of them had left the airport, we were half way across Lake Michigan. By the time Janice's driver-trained brother headed his car south on the highway back to Kalamazoo, we were touching down at O'Hare in Chicago. There we were met by Reverends Heys and Decker and the Lamm Lubbers family. They, too, bid us Godspeed. Soon we were again airborne at a height of 35,000 feet, traveling at eight-tenths the speed of sound, while we ate a delicious breakfast of pancakes and ham and eggs. It was raining two hours later at New Orleans. Over the Gulf we ate a sumptuous roast beef diner. Here there was not much to see outside the plane except cloud and patches of blue Gulf and Caribbean. Suddenly there was a momentary view of extremely mountainous land before we were touching down at 2:15 p.m. in Jamaica. Columbus had it all over on us when he saw Jamaica in his unique approach to the island. We never saw it like that. But then Columbus never saw it as we did. Still, Columbus was probably better prepared for the atmosphere of his new environment than this writer. For his approach was made under long days and rays of enduring hot tropical sun. Whereas deplaning, meant for us exiting from an air-cooled jet into the heat of an oven. Immediately, not only did handbag and camera feel heavy, but the summer suit felt heavier. A cheery greeting was semaphored to us from some of our Jamaican brethren up

on the “waving gallery.” The customs man made a little peek into my luggage. There was considerably more of a hold-up (almost as popularly understood) on the item of our missionary’s newly received gift of a stereo radio and tape player. He had to pay over \$60.00 in customs fee for bringing this possession into the country.

A bite of supper did not come for us until about 8:20 that night. Although only 15 minute drive from the airport, we had much to do opening the house and starting the car. We also had our troubles. There you are in a strange land of rather African setting, smelling like a steaming jungle, car stalled, battery weak, and you are quickly tiring of pushing the little English Ford up and down slopes. You eye the reluctant conveyance rather dazedly. It is dark and getting darker. No one seems to know what to do. You are stalled dead on what turns out to be The Creek, a one-way artery of the city running in one direction with speeding traffic and in the opposite direction with a sluggish canal and its whitish water. You get the dead car off to the side to avoid the murderous stream of traffic zipping by. Another stream surges all around you, the overwhelming endless flood of humanity, so that you become immediately converted to the view that here at least there is population explosion. Hordes of peoples, of both sexes, of all ages and many races are on this island confine closely thrown together. Now a swarm of Jamaicans mass around you and the tiny Cortina like flies on a raisin. It has become a very popular thing now for many a self-styled auto mechanic to set himself up in the car repair business, choosing the spot of his local “garage” right on the side of the road wherever he can “cop” or “con” a place along the right of way. You find a lot of cars strewn along the sidewalks with various volunteer experts in charge, accompanied with their coterie of willing advisers, trying to mend them. The mechanic has no place or premises of his own in which to put the cars he is purporting to mend. Try it sometime – when visiting in Jamaica – open the hood (bonnet) of your car and you will be quickly surrounded by a lot of Jamaican hooligans in no time flat. Into just such a place our car slid silently to sickening rest. But the crowds of men about were kind and did help when we did not know where to go or what to do. As never before you find your defense and aid in God and His providence.

Somehow or other you feel that this could be but the beginning of a long night. Especially is this so when around a bend in the road both lanes are strewn with rock. The car hits one of them or one of them hits the car. A car behind tinks its horn at us and something is yelled at us which Rev. Elliott translates as, “Your gas tank is leaking.” We just make it in time to lose most of the gas at the station where we “filled up.” Some of the gas was saved in an old oil can. The leak was repaired not with a stick of gun, but with a stick. Eventually, in another twenty-four hours, this entirely sealed up the leak. Finally, we had that late supper. We felt better. Our faith was strengthened. We knew the Lord would take care of us and use us in His service. Under mosquito netting we slept well despite dog and rooster serenade. One thing I remembered as I went to bed: even my luggage was sweating! That fellow who always sleeps next to me (My-Soul) nudged me and grunted sleepily, “Welcome to Jamaica!”

We live in direful days. As we flew to Jamaica, the headlines read on the plane screamed in heavy, bold type, HIJACKERS! On my return the headlines carried the threat of the Weathermen to blow up every airport in the country. Revolution is everywhere: in the home, school, church and country. Mind you, not Reformation, but Revolution! In the university, the student is required, under the guise of Comparative Social Institutions, to read and study Revolution. But then, revolution is the harvest of the modern university ever since the seeding of its deleterious crop early in the century twentieth. One of Jamaica’s boasted national heroes is a revolutionist. A postage stamp bears his likeness; a famous boulevard on the island, his name.

Ours is a much more advanced country, in every way, yet here, too, low-brows are made heroes and lauded with honorary (not earned) memorials. One of our most persistent myths is the advantage of revolution. The advantage is said to be renewal. But renewal of a country cannot come by the means which destroy it. Both here, and in Jamaica, the advocates of revolution are sorry candidates for any office in any kind of administration. Such small-brained people are not liberals, nor leaders, but exceedingly immature egotists envenomed with contempt and fear, a fear of work and contempt of people. Revolutionaries only overthrow one set of fascistic tyrants for another crude lot just as oppressive, or, as history shows, much worse. As the "reign of terror" continues, the world is being torn to bits. The church of the world is also being torn to bits. But as for the church in the world, the true church of Jesus Christ, the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. The anarchy and destruction continue. It is Gog and Magog versus Christendom. The vulture and the jackal are in mortal combat. Babylon and the now-Jerusalem lay each other out in bloody shreds. Antichrist in the confused violence makes a kamikaze dive on his own nuclear stock-pile. The dragon voraciously devours his own tail. The roaring lion eats himself up. In the midst of the combat the church continues, from one point of view, like poor Lazarus, small, weak, persecuted, but suffering for Christ's sake; while from another point of view, it is a Boanerges, thundering out its mandated message, "Our help is in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth!" The message is impelled by the commission, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." In Paul, the church sent forth an indomitable witness, who testified of Jesus and the resurrection wherever he went, in the Middle East, in Asia Minor, in Europe, in the arena, in prison, by the riverside, even on an island!

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