

JOHN PATON: *FACING CANNIBALS WITH COURAGE*¹

In 1606, a chain of eighty islands in the South Pacific was discovered by Fernandez de Quiros of Spain. In 1773, the Islands were explored by Captain James Cook and named the New Hebrides because of the similarities with the Hebrides Islands off the Northwest coast of Scotland. In 1980, the New Hebrides gained its independence from Britain and France and was named Vanuatu. The chain of Islands is about 450 miles long. If you draw a line straight from Honolulu to Sydney, it will cut through Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu, two thirds of the way between Hawaii and Australia. The population today is about 190,000.

To the best of our knowledge, the New Hebrides had no Christian influence before John Williams and James Harris from the London Missionary Society landed in 1839. Both of these missionaries were killed and eaten by cannibals on the island of Erromanga on November 20 of that year, only minutes after going ashore. Forty-eight years later John Paton wrote, "Thus were the New Hebrides baptized with the blood of martyrs; and Christ thereby told the whole Christian world that he claimed these islands as His own"

"I was born in a cottage on the farm of Braehead, in the parish of Kirkmahoe, near Dumfries, in the south of Scotland, on the 24th of May, 1824. My father had a strong desire to be a Minister of the Gospel; but when he finally saw that God's will had marked out for him another lot, he reconciled himself by entering with his own soul into this solemn vow—that if God gave him sons, he would consecrate them unreservedly to the ministry of Christ, if the Lord saw fit to accept the offering, and open up their way.

SPIRITUAL REALITY IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE

"Thither daily, and oftentimes a day, generally after each meal, we saw our father retire, and shut the door [of the closet]; and we children got to understand by a sort of spiritual instinct (for the thing was too sacred to be talked about) that prayers were being poured out there for us, as of old by the High Priest within the veil in the Most Holy Place. We occasionally heard the pathetic echoes of a trembling voice pleading as if for life, and we learned to slip out and in past that door on tiptoe, not to disturb the holy colloquy. The outside world might not know, but we knew, whence came that happy light as of a new-born smile that always was dawning on my father's face: it was a reflection from the Divine Presence, in the consciousness of which he lived. Never, in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. *Though everything else in religion were be some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory or blotted from my understanding, my soul would wader back to those early scenes, and shut itself up once again in that Sanctuary Closet, and, hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, 'He walked with God, why may not I?'*"

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS AFTER CHURCH

"He [father] would turn the talk ever so naturally to some Bible story or some martyr reminiscence, or some happy allusion to *Pilgrim's Progress*. And then it was quite a contest, which of us would get reading aloud, while all the rest listened and father added here and there a happy thought, or illustration or anecdote. There were eleven of us brought up in a home like that; and never one of the eleven, boy or girl, man or woman, has been heard, or ever will be heard, saying that Sabbath was dull or wearisome for us, or suggesting that we have heard of or seen any way more likely than that for making the Day of the Lord bright and blessed alike for parents and for children. But God help the homes where these things are done by force and not by love!...The Shorter Catechism was gone through regularly, each answering the question asked, till the whole had been explained, and its foundation in Scripture shown by the proof-texts adduced...It laid the solid rock foundations of our religious life. After years have given to these questions and their answers a deeper or a modified meaning, but none of us have ever once even dreamed of wishing that we had been otherwise trained."

A PICTURE OF FATHER AND SON

"My dear father walked with me the first six miles of the way. His counsels and tears and heavenly conversation on that parting journey are fresh in my heart as if it had been but yesterday; and tears are on my cheeks as freely now as then, whenever memory steals me away to the scene. For the last half-mile or so we walked on together in almost unbroken silence, my father, as was often his custom, carrying hat in hand, while his long, flowing yellow hair streamed like a girl's

¹ John Piper's biography series introduced me to John Paton. I have reproduced much of his work here from www.desiringgod.org

down his shoulders. His lips kept moving in silent prayers for me; and his tears fell fast when our eyes met each other in looks for which all speech was vain! We halted on reaching the appointed parting place, he grasped my hand firmly for a minute in silence, and then solemnly and affectionately said: 'God bless you my son! Your father's God prosper you, and keep you from all evil!' Unable to say more, his lips kept moving in silent prayer and in tears we embraced and parted. I ran off as fast as I could and, when about to turn a corner in the road where he would lose sight of me, I looked back and saw him still standing with head uncovered where I had left him—gazing after me. Waving my hat in adieu, I was round the corner and out of sight in an instant. But my heart was too full and sore to carry me further, so I darted into the side of the road and wept for a time. Then, rising up cautiously, I climbed the dyke to see if he yet stood where I had left him; and just as that moment I caught a glimpse of him climbing the dyke and looking out for me! He did not see me, and after he had gazed eagerly in my direction for a while he got down, set his face towards home, and began to return—his head still uncovered, and his heart, I felt sure, still rising in prayers for me. I watched through blinding tears, till his form faded from my gaze; and then, hastening on my way, vowed deeply and oft, by the help of God, to live and act so as never to grieve or dishonor such a father and mother as He had given me. In my earlier years particularly, when exposed to many temptations, his parting form rose before me as that of a guardian Angel. It is no Pharisaism, but deep gratitude, which makes me here testify that the memory of that scene not only helped, by God's grace, to keep me pure from the prevailing sins, but also stimulated me in all my studies, that I might not fall short of his hopes, and in all my Christian duties, that I might faithfully follow his shining example."

FIRST MINISTRY AND THE CALL TO MISSIONS

In order to go to the New Hebrides he had to leave this very fruitful ministry. Paton had served for ten years as a city Missionary in urban Glasgow among the lower income people with tremendous success and hundreds of unchurched people were attending his classes and services during the week. One of his loved professors of divinity and minister of the congregation where he had served as an elder tried to persuade him to stay in that ministry. He reported that he argued that

Green Street Church was doubtless the sphere for which God had given me peculiar qualifications, and in which He had so largely blessed my labors; that if I left those now attending my Classes and Meetings, they might be scattered, and many of them would probably fall away; that I was leaving certainty for uncertainty - work in which God had made me greatly useful, for work in which I might fail to be useful, and only throw away my life amongst Cannibals.

In fact Paton says, "The opposition was so strong from nearly all, and many of them warm Christian friends, that I was sorely tempted to question whether I was carrying out the Divine will, or only some headstrong wish of my own. This also caused me much anxiety, and drove me close to God in prayer." "Happy in my work as I felt, and successful by the blessing of God, yet I continually heard, and chiefly during my last years in the Divinity Hall, the wail of the perishing Heathen in the South Seas; and I saw that few were caring for them."

"With regard to my life among the cannibals, as I had only once to die, I was content to leave the time and place and means in the hand of God, who had already marvelously preserved me." When one of the respected elders warned him, "The cannibals! You will be eaten by Cannibals!", Paton responded, "Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my Resurrection body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer!"

A CALL TO COURAGE: RISKING LOVED ONES

He and his wife arrived on the island of Tanna November 5, 1858, and Mary was pregnant. The baby was born February 12, 1859. "Our island-exile thrilled with joy! But the greatest of sorrows was treading hard upon the heels of that great joy!" Mary had reaped attacks of ague, fever, pneumonia and diarrhea with delirium for two weeks.

Then in a moment, altogether unexpectedly, she died on March third. To crown my sorrows, and complete my loneliness, the dear baby-boy, whom we had named after her father, Peter Robert Robson, was taken from me after one week's sickness, on the 20th of March. Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me; as for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows! He dug the two graves with his own hands and buried them by the house he had built.

Stunned by that dreadful loss, in entering upon this field of labor to which the Lord had Himself so evidently led me, my reason seemed for a time almost to give way. The ever-merciful Lord sustained me . . . and that spot became my sacred and much-frequented shrine, during all the following months and years when I labored on for the salvation of

the savage Islanders amidst difficulties, dangers, and deaths. Whenever Tanna turns to the Lord, and is won for Christ, men in after days will find the memory of that spot still green, where with ceaseless prayers and tears I claimed that land for God in which I had 'buried my dead' with faith and hope. But for Jesus, and the fellowship he vouchsafed to me there, I must have gone mad and died beside the lonely grave!

A CALL TO COURAGE: RISKING HEALTH

"Fever and ague had attacked me fourteen times severely" (p. 105). In view of his wife's death he never knew when any one of these attacks would mean his own death. Imagine struggling with a life-and-death sickness over and over with only one Christian native friend named Abraham who had come with him to the island to help him.

For example, as he was building a new house to get to higher, healthier ground, he collapsed with the fever on his way up the steep hill from the coast: "When about two-thirds up the hill I became so faint that I concluded I was dying. Lying down on the ground, sloped against the root of a tree to keep me from rolling to the bottom, I took farewell of old Abraham, of my mission work, and of everything around! In this weak state I lay, watched over by my faithful companion, and fell into a quiet sleep" (p. 106). He revived and was restored. But only great courage could press on month after month, year after year, knowing that the fever that took his wife and son lay at the door.

And it's not as if these dangers were only during one season at the beginning of his missionary life. Fifteen years later with another wife and another child on another island, he records, "During the hurricanes, from January to April, 1873, when the *Dayspring* [the mission ship] was wrecked, we lost a darling child by death, my dear wife had a protracted illness, and I was brought very low with severe rheumatic fever . . . and was reported as dying" (p. 384).

A CALL TO COURAGE: RISKING LIFE WITH HOSTILE CANNIBALS

This is what makes his *Autobiography* read like a thriller. In his first four years on Tanna when he was all alone, he moved from one savage crisis to the next. One wonders how his mind kept from snapping, as he never knew when his house would be surrounded with angry natives or his party would be ambushed along the way. How do you survive when there is no kickback time? No unwinding. No sure refuge on earth. "Our continuous danger caused me now oftentimes to sleep with my clothes on, that I might start at a moment's warning. My faithful dog Clutha would give a sharp bark and awake me. . . . God made them fear this precious creature, and often used her in saving our lives" (p. 178).

"My enemies seldom slackened their hateful designs against my life, however calmed or baffled for the moment. . . . A wild chief followed me around for four hours with his loaded musket, and, though often directed towards me, God restrained his hand. I spoke kindly to him, and attended to my work as if he had not been there, fully persuaded that my God had placed me there, and would protect me till my allotted task was finished. Looking up in unceasing prayer to our dear Lord Jesus, I left all in his hands, and felt immortal till my work was done." (p. 117)

One of the most remarkable things about Paton's dealing with danger is the gutsy forthrightness with which he spoke to his assailants. "One morning at daybreak I found my house surrounded by armed men, and a chief intimated that they had assembled to take my life. Seeing that I was entirely in their hands, I knelt down and gave myself away body and soul to the Lord Jesus, for what seemed the last time on earth. Rising, I went out to them, and began calmly talking about their unkind treatment of me and contrasting it with all my conduct towards them. . . . At last some of the Chiefs, who had attended the Worship, rose and said, "Our conduct has been bad; but now we will fight for you, and kill all those who hate you."

[Once] when natives in large numbers were assembled at my house, a man furiously rushed on me with his axe but a Kaserumini Chief snatched a spade with which I had been working, and dexterously defended me from instant death. Life in such circumstances led me to cling very near to the Lord Jesus; I knew not, for one brief hour, when or how attack might be made; and yet, with my trembling hand clasped in the hand once nailed on Calvary, and now swaying the scepter of the universe, calmness and peace and resignation abode in my soul. (p. 117)

Once a native named Ian called Paton to his sick bed, and as Paton leaned over him, he pulled a dagger and held it to Paton's heart. "I durst neither move nor speak, except that my heart kept praying to the Lord to spare me, or if my time was come to take me home to Glory with Himself. There passed a few moments of awful suspense. My sight went and came. Not a word had been spoken, except to Jesus; and then Ian wheeled the knife around, thrust it into the sugar cane leaf. And cried to me, "Go, go quickly!" . . . I ran for my life a weary four miles till I reached the Mission House, faint, yet praising God for such a deliverance (p.191)."

WHAT DID HIS COURAGE ACHIEVE?: ANIWA TURNED TO CHRIST

The entire island of Aniwa turned to Christ. Four years of seemingly fruitless and costly labor on Tanna could have meant the end of Paton's missionary life. He could have remembered that in Glasgow for ten years he had had unprecedented success as an urban missionary. Now for four years he seemed to have accomplished nothing and he lost his wife and child in the process. But instead of going home, he turned his missionary heart to Aniwa. "I claimed Aniwa for Jesus, and by the grace of God, Aniwa now worships at the Savior's feet" (p. 312).

WHAT DID HIS COURAGE ACHIEVE?: THOUSANDS CALLED TO MISSIONS AND HOME CHURCHES STRENGTHENED

On writing the 2nd volume of his *Autobiography*: I wanted to show God's "marvelous goodness in using my humble voice and pen, and the story of my life, for interesting thousands and tens of thousands in the work of Missions" (p. 220).

Oftentimes, while passing through the perils and defeats of my first four years in the Mission-field on Tanna, I wondered . . . why God permitted such things. But on looking back now, I already clearly perceive . . . that the Lord was thereby preparing me for doing, and providing me materials wherewith to accomplish, the best work of all my life, namely the kindling of the heart of Australian Presbyterianism with a living affection for these Islanders of their own Southern Seas . . . and in being the instrument under God of sending out Missionary after Missionary to the New Hebrides, to claim another island and still another for Jesus. That work, and all that may spring from it in Time and Eternity, never could have been accomplished by me but for first the sufferings and then the story of my Tanna enterprise! (pp. 222- 223)

And the awakening was not just in Australia, but in Scotland and around the world. For example, he tells us what the effect of his home tour was on his own small Reformed Presbyterian Church after his four years of pain and seeming fruitlessness on Tanna. "I was . . . filled with a high passion of gratitude to be able to proclaim, at the close of my tour . . . that of all her ordained Ministers, one in every six was a Missionary of the Cross!" (p. 280). Indeed the effects at home were far more widespread than that - and here is a lesson for all churches.

Nor did the dear old Church thus cripple herself; on the contrary, her zeal for Missions accompanied, if not caused, unwonted prosperity at home. New waves of liberality passed over the heart of her people. Debts that had burdened many of the Churches and Manses were swept away. Additional Congregations were organized. And in May, 1876, the Reformed Presbyterian Church entered into an honorable and independent Union with her larger, wealthier, and more progressive sister, the Free Church of Scotland. (p. 280) In other words, the courageous perseverance of John Paton on Tanna, in spite of apparent fruitlessness, bore fruit in blessing for the mission field and for the church at home in ways he could have never dreamed in his dangers.

WHAT DID HIS COURAGE ACHIEVE?: CONVERSION OF THE HARD-HEARTED

Paton had an eye to the sophisticated European despisers of the gospel as he wrote the story of his life. He wanted to give evidence to skeptical modern men that the gospel can and does transform unlikely people and their societies.

"It would give a wonderful shock, I suppose, to many namby-pamby Christians to whom the title 'Mighty to Save' conveys no ideas of reality, to be told that nine or ten converted murderers were taking Communion with them."

"When I have read or heard the shallow objections of irreligious scribblers and talkers, hinting that there was no reality in conversions, and that mission effort was but waste, oh, how my heart has yearned to plant them just one week on Tanna, with the "natural" man all around in the person of Cannibal and Heathen, and only the one "spiritual" man in the person of the converted Abraham, nursing them, feeding them, saving them 'for the love Jesus' - that I might just learn how many hours it took to convince them that Christ in man was a reality after all! All the skepticism of Europe would hide its head in foolish shame; and all its doubts would dissolve under one glance of the new light that Jesus, and Jesus alone, pours from the converted Cannibal's eye." (p. 107)

WHERE DID THIS COURAGE COME FROM?: A DEEP SENSE OF DIVINE CALLING.

Before he was 12 years old, Paton says, "I had given my soul to God, and was resolved to aim at being a missionary of the cross, or a minister of the gospel" (p. 21). As he came to the end of his studies in divinity in Glasgow at the age of 32, he says, "I continually heard . . . the wail of the perishing Heathen in the South Seas; and I saw that few were caring for them, while I well knew that many would be ready to take up my work in Calton" (p. 52). "The Lord kept saying within me, 'Since none better qualified can be got, rise and offer yourself!'"

When he was criticized for leaving a fruitful ministry, one crucial event sealed his sense of calling, namely, a word from his parents: "Heretofore we feared to bias you, but now we must tell you why we praise God for the decision to which you have been led. Your father's heart was set upon being a Minister, but other claims forced him to give it up. When you were given to them, your father and mother laid you upon the altar, their first-born, to be consecrated, if God saw fit, as a Missionary of the Cross; and it has been their constant prayer that you might be prepared, qualified, and led to this very decision; and we pray with all our heart that the Lord may accept your offering, long spare you, and give you many souls from the Heathen World for your hire." (p. 57)

In response to that Paton wrote, "From the moment, every doubt as to my path of duty forever vanished. I saw the hand of God very visibly, not only preparing me before, but now leading me to, the Foreign Mission field" (p. 57). That sense of duty and calling bred in him an undaunted courage that would never look back.

WHERE DID THIS COURAGE COME FROM?: HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Over and over this faith sustained him in the most threatening and frightening situations. As he was trying to escape from Tanna at the end of four years of dangers, he and Abraham were surrounded by raging natives who kept urging each other to strike the first blow.

My heart rose up to the Lord Jesus; I saw Him watching all the scene. My peace came back to me like a wave from God. I realized that I was immortal till my Master's work with me was done. The assurance came to me, as if a voice out of Heaven had spoken, that not a musket would be fired to wound us, not a club prevail to strike us, not a spear leave the hand in which it was held vibrating to be thrown, not an arrow leave the bow, or a killing stone the fingers, without the permission of Jesus Christ, whose is all power in Heaven and on Earth. He rules all Nature, animate and inanimate, and restrains even the Savage of the South Seas. (p. 207)

After getting away with his life and losing everything that he had on earth ("my little earthly All"), instead of despairing or pouting or being paralyzed with self-pity, he moved forward expecting to see God's good purpose in time - which he saw in the ministry that opened to him, first of missions mobilization and then of work on Aniwa: "Often since have I thought that the Lord stripped me thus bare of all these interests, that I might with undistracted mind devote my entire energy to the special work soon to be carved out for me, and of which at this moment neither I nor anyone had ever dreamed" (p. 220).

Year after year, "disappointments and successes were strangely intermingled" (p. 247) in his life. There was no long period of time, it seems, where life was very easy. And we would distort the man if we said there were no low moments. "I felt so disappointed, so miserable," he wrote about one period of his travels, "that I wished I had been in my grave with my dear departed and my brethren on the Islands who had fallen around me" (p. 232). It was not always easy after the words, "The Lord has taken away," to add the words, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." But the way out was clear, and he used it again and again. When the mission ship, *Dayspring*, that he had worked so hard to fund, was sunk in a storm, he wrote:

Whatever trials have befallen me in my Earthly Pilgrimage, I have never had the trial of doubting that perhaps, after all, Jesus had made some mistake. No! my blessed Lord Jesus makes no mistakes! When we see all His meaning, we shall then understand, what now we can only trustfully believe that all is well - best for us, best for the cause most dear to us, best for the good of others and the glory of God. (p. 488)

Near the end of his life, at age 79, he was back on his beloved island Aniwa. "I cannot visit the villages, or go among the people and the sick, as formerly, owing to an increased feebleness in my legs and lumbago. Which is painful for the last fortnight. But all is as our Master sends it, and we submit thankfully, as all is nothing to what we deserve; and adored be our God. We have in our dear Lord Jesus [grace] for peace and joy in all circumstances."⁸

WHERE DID THIS COURAGE COME FROM?: SUBMISSIVE PRAYER TO GOD'S WISDOM

How do you claim the promises of God for protection when your wife was equally faithful but, rather than being protected, died; and when the Gordons on Erromanga were equally trusting in those promises and were martyred?⁹ Paton had learned the answer to this question from listening to his mother pray, even before he learned the theology that supports it. When the potato crop failed in Scotland, Mrs. Paton said to her children, "O my children, love your Heavenly Father, tell him in faith and prayer all your needs, and he will supply your wants so far as it shall be for your good and His glory" (p. 22).¹⁰ This is what Paton trusted God for in claiming the promises: that God would do what was for Paton's good and for his own glory.

I . . . assured them that I was not afraid to die, for at death my Savior would take me to be with Himself in Heaven, and to be far happier than I had ever been on Earth. I then lifted up my hands and eyes to the Heavens, and prayed aloud for Jesus . . . either to protect me or to take me home to Glory as He saw to be for the best. (p. 164)

The peace God gave him in these crises was not the peace of sure escape but the peace that God is good and wise and omnipotent and will do all things well. "We felt that God was near, and omnipotent to do what seemed best in his sight" (p. 197).

WHERE DID THIS COURAGE COME FROM?: A JOY IN GOD

Oh that the pleasure-seeking men and women of the world could only taste and feel the real joy of those who know and love the true God - a heritage which the world . . . cannot give to them, but which the poorest and humblest followers of Jesus inherit and enjoy! (p. 78)

My heart often says within itself - when, *when* will men's eyes at home be opened? When will the rich and the learned . . . renounce their shallow frivolities, and go to live amongst the poor, the ignorant, the outcast, and the lost, and write their eternal fame on the souls by them blessed and brought to the Savior? Those who have tasted this highest joy, "The joy of the Lord," will never again ask - *Is Life worth living?*¹

Near the end of his life he wrote about the joy that carried him on and about his hope that his own children would undertake the same mission and find the same joy:

Let me record my immovable conviction that this is the noblest service in which any human being, can spend or be spent; and that, if God gave me back my life to be lived over again, I would without one quiver of hesitation lay it on the altar to Christ, that He might use it as before in similar ministries of love, especially amongst those who have never yet heard the Name of Jesus. Nothing that has been endured, and nothing that can now befall me, makes me tremble - on the contrary, *I deeply rejoice* - when I breathe the prayer that it may please the blessed Lord to turn the hearts of all my children to the Mission Field and that He may open up their way and make it *their pride and joy* to live and die in carrying Jesus and His Gospel into the heart of the Heathen World! (p. 444, emphasis added)

Where did the joy of John G. Paton most deeply repose? The answer, it seems, is that it rested most deeply in the experience of personal communion with Jesus Christ mediated through the promise, "Lo, I am with you always." Therefore, the final source of his courage I would mention is that

WHERE DID THIS COURAGE COME FROM?: PERSONAL FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS

The power this promise had to make Christ real to Paton in hours of crisis was unlike any other Scripture or prayer:

Without that abiding consciousness of the presence and power of my dear Lord and Savior, nothing else in all the world could have preserved me from losing my reason and perishing miserably. In his words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," became to me so real that it would not have startled me to behold Him, as Stephen did, gazing down upon the scene. I felt His supporting power. . . . It is the sober truth, and it comes back to me sweetly after 20 years, that I had my nearest and dearest glimpses of the face and smiles of my blessed Lord in those dread moments when musket, club, or spear was being leveled at my life.¹⁵ Oh the bliss of living and enduring, as seeing "Him who is invisible"! (p. 117)

One of the most powerful paragraphs in his *Autobiography* describes his experience of hiding in a tree, at the mercy of an unreliable chief, as hundreds of angry natives hunted him for his life. What he experienced there was the deepest source of Paton's joy and courage. In fact, I would dare to say that to share this experience and call others to enjoy it was the reason that he wrote the story of his life.¹⁶ He began his *Autobiography* with the words, "What I write here is for the glory of God" (p. 2).

Being entirely at the mercy of such doubtful and vacillating friends, I, though perplexed, felt it best to obey. I climbed into the tree and was left there alone in the bush. The hours I spent there live all before me as if it were but of yesterday. I heard the frequent discharging of muskets, and the yells of the Savages. Yet I sat there among the branches, as safe as in the arms of Jesus. Never, in all my sorrows, did my Lord draw nearer to me, and speak more soothingly in my soul, than when the moonlight flickered among those chestnut leaves, and the night air played on my throbbing brow, as I told all my heart to Jesus. Alone, yet not alone! If it be to glorify my God, I will not grudge to spend many nights alone in such a tree, to feel again my Savior's spiritual presence, to enjoy His consoling fellowship. If thus thrown back upon your own soul, alone, all alone, in the midnight, in the bush, in the very embrace of death itself, have you a Friend that will not fail you then? (p. 200)