

"God Is a Shield"

The Present Truth – August 31, 1893

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In the story of John G. Paton's "Thirty Years Among the South Sea Cannibals," are numerous instances of the power of the gospel to "calm the savage breast to peace," and of the zeal which leads the converted heathen to tell the story of Christ and His salvation to others who had not heard the gracious news. Mr. Paton gives the following account of one such instance—

"In heathendom every true convert becomes at once a missionary. The changed life, shining out amid the surrounding darkness, is a gospel in largest capitals which all can read. Our Islanders, especially, having little to engage or otherwise distract attention, become intense and devoted workers for the Lord Jesus, if once the Divine passion for souls stirs within them.

"A heathen has been all his days groping after peace of soul in dark superstition and degrading rites. You pour into his soul the light of revelation. He learns that God is love, that God sent His Son to die for him, and that he is the heir of life eternal in and through Jesus Christ. By the blessed enlightenment of the Spirit of the Lord he believes all this. He passes into a third heaven of joy, and he burns to tell every one of this glad tidings. Others see the change in his disposition, in his character, in his whole life and actions; and amid such surroundings, every convert is a burning and a shining light. Even whole populations are thus brought into the outer court of the temple; and islands, still heathen and cannibal, are positively eager for the missionary to live amongst them, and would guard his life and property now in complete security, where a very few years ago everything would have been instantly sacrificed on touching their shores? They are not Christianized, neither are they civilized, and the light has been kindled all around them, and though still only shining afar, they cannot but rejoice in its beams.

"But even where the path is not so smooth, nor any welcome awaiting them, native converts show amazing zeal. For instance, one of our chiefs, full of the Christ-kindled desire to seek and to save, sent a message to an island chief, that he and four attendants would come on Sabbath and tell them the gospel of Jehovah God. The reply came back sternly forbidding their visit, and threatening with death any Christian that approached their village. Our chief sent in response a loving message, telling them that Jehovah had taught the Christians to return good for evil, and that they would come unarmed to tell the story of how the Son of God came into the world and died in order to bless and save His enemies. The heathen chief sent back a stern and prompt reply once more, 'If you come, you will be killed.'

"On Sabbath morning, the Christian chief and his four companions were met outside the village by the heathen chief, who implored and threatened them once more. But the former said, 'We come to you without weapons of war! We come only to tell you about Jesus. We believe that He will protect us to-day.'

"As they steadily pressed forward towards the village, spears began to be thrown at them. Some they evaded, being all except one most dextrous warriors; and others they literally received with their bare hands, striking them and turning them aside in an incredible manner.

The heathen, apparently thunderstruck at these men thus approaching them without weapons of war, and not even flinging back their own spears which they had turned aside, desisted from mere surprise, after having thrown what the old chief called 'a shower of spears.' Our Christian chief called out, as he and his companions drew up in the midst of them on the village public ground:

"Jehovah thus protects us. He has given us all your spears! Once we would have thrown them back at you and killed you. But now we come not to fight, but to tell you about Jesus. He has changed our dark hearts. He asks you now to lay down all these your other weapons of war, and to hear what we can tell you about the love of God, our great Father, the only living God.'

"The heathen were perfectly over-awed. They manifestly looked upon these Christians as protected by some Invisible One! They listened for the first time to the story of the Gospel and of the cross. We lived to see that chief and all his tribe sitting in the school of Christ. And there is perhaps not an island in these Southern Seas, amongst all those won for Christ, where similar acts of heroism on the part of converts cannot be recited by every missionary to the honour of our poor natives and to the glory of their Saviour."