DAVID LIVINGSTONE



10

David Livingstone

A Blantyre Mill Boy, the Open Sore of the World, and the Hands That Carried Him Home

Ochorus

Portraits of Courage – David Livingstone

A Blantyre Mill Boy, the Open Sore of the World, and the Hands That Carried Him Home

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Matthew 10:8

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Preface

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"
— Isaiah 52:7, ASV

The earlier volumes of this series have told of a Chinese church leader who died in a Communist labour camp, an American who prayed his way through the villages of the Punjab, a Dutch watchmaker who hid Jews behind a false wall, a Scottish mill girl who went alone up the rivers of Calabar, an African bishop who had once been sold as a slave, an Indian widow who built a home for thousands of outcast women, an Oxford don who was found by God against his will, a young widow who walked into the Ecuadorian forest to live among the people who had killed her husband, and an Irish missionary who made a home at Dohnavur, in South India, for children rescued from temple service. This tenth volume tells the story of a man whose name, for a hundred years, was almost a synonym for the word "missionary," and whose life, looked at closely, fits that word less neatly than his admirers liked to think.

David Livingstone was born in 1813 in a single room in a tenement at a cotton mill on the Clyde, and he went to work in the mill at the age of ten. He made himself a doctor and a minister, sailed for southern Africa in 1840 for the London Missionary Society, and spent most of the remaining thirty-two years of his life on that continent. He walked across it from the

Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. He led a government expedition up the Zambezi that ended in failure and in the death of his wife. He spent his last seven years wandering, ill and often lost, in search of the sources of the Nile, and he died in 1873 in a village near the swamps of Lake Bangweulu, in what is now Zambia. The men and women who had travelled with him buried his heart there and carried his body to the coast, and he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Mary Slessor, whose story was told in the fourth volume, offered herself as a missionary when the news of his death reached Dundee. She was one of many. For two generations Livingstone's name sent young people to Africa, raised money for missions, and stood in sermons and Sunday-school prizes for everything that was brave and selfless in the Christian life. It was also used, by people who cared little for his faith, to justify the conquest of the continent he loved.

Why Courage?

His physical courage needs no defending. He was mauled by a lion and set his own arm, badly, so that it never healed straight. He crossed country no European had mapped, often with nothing but a few beads, a sextant and the goodwill of the people whose land he was passing through. He faced down armed men more than once, and he went on travelling for years with fever, dysentery and bleeding that would have sent most people home.

But that is not the courage this book most wants to examine. Livingstone spent his life doing things that did not work. In more than thirty years in Africa he baptised one African convert whom we know of, a chief named Sechele, and he soon suspended him from communion. His great river was blocked by rapids he had not seen. The mission he called for on the Shire Highlands buried its bishop within a year. The family he loved

paid for his journeys with years of poverty and separation, and his wife died beside him on the Zambezi. He quarrelled with colleagues, misjudged people, and sometimes told the story of his own failures more kindly than the facts allowed. And yet he kept going, not always wisely, in the conviction that God had given him a work to do and that its results belonged to God.

There is a harder kind of courage in that than in facing a lion. It is the courage to go on believing that faithfulness matters when success has failed to come, and to keep praying for the ending of an evil that you can see no way to end. Livingstone's campaign against the slave trade in East and Central Africa was the steadiest thing in his unsteady life, and his last years were spent among slave traders whose cruelty he could neither stop nor escape. He died before the great Zanzibar slave market was closed, a month after his death. He never knew.

How This Book Is Written

Like the earlier volumes, this book tries to be honest about its sources.

Livingstone was a prolific writer, and nearly everything he published is now in the public domain. His *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857), the *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries* (1865), which he wrote with his brother Charles, and *The Last Journals of David Livingstone*, edited by his friend Horace Waller in 1874, let him speak for himself, and he is quoted from them throughout. So is the first full biography, W. G. Blaikie's *The Personal Life of David Livingstone* (1880), which printed many of his private letters and journal entries, and Henry Morton Stanley's *How I Found Livingstone* (1872).

None of these is a neutral witness. Livingstone wrote his books to be read, to raise support and to sway the government, and he left things out.

Waller edited the last journals with a reverence that softened some passages. Blaikie wrote, with the family's help, the life of a saint. Stanley was a journalist who needed a story. Modern historians, working from Livingstone's manuscripts, his field notebooks and the letters of the people around him, have corrected much of the Victorian picture, and this book has learned from them, though it does not quote them.

Two further cautions belong here. The first is that Livingstone lived at the beginning of the age of European empire in Africa, and his life cannot be told apart from it. He wanted Britain to come to Africa, though not in the way it eventually came. A Christian biography should say so plainly. The second is that the language used about Africans in his time, his own included, was often contemptuous. This book quotes it only where it is needed to understand him, marks it when it does, and does not adopt it. It also tries to give the African men and women of his story their due, as people who made choices of their own: Sechele, who argued theology with him and evangelised his own people long after Livingstone had left; the Makololo who walked with him to the Atlantic and back; Susi, Chuma, Jacob Wainwright and the others who brought him home.

Scripture in This Book

As in the earlier volumes, all Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version of 1901, which is in the public domain. Each chapter opens with a passage that carries its theme. Where Livingstone himself quotes the Bible, he quotes the King James Version, and his words are left as he wrote them.

The verse at the head of this preface is Isaiah's, about the messenger whose feet bring good news across the mountains. Livingstone's feet crossed more mountains than almost any messenger of his century.

Whether he always brought good news is a question this book will keep asking. He would not have minded the question. Near the end of his life, ill and alone in the heart of the continent, he wrote in his journal that he had dedicated his whole self again to Christ, and asked only that he might be allowed to finish his task. The story that follows is about that self, and that task, and what God made of both.

Introduction: The Saint, the Explorer, and the Record

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves."
— 2 Corinthians 4:7, ASV

A Funeral in the Abbey

On 18 April 1874, David Livingstone was buried in the nave of Westminster Abbey. The coffin had come from Southampton by special train. The Prince of Wales and the Prime Minister were among the mourners, the Queen had sent a wreath, and the congregation sang the Scottish paraphrase "O God of Bethel, by whose hand." Among the eight pallbearers were Henry Morton Stanley, the journalist who had found him alive at Ujiji, old friends and companions of his travels, and a young African named Jacob Wainwright, who had carried his body from the middle of the continent to the coast.

The black marble slab over the grave still bears the inscription chosen for it. It begins, "Brought by faithful hands over land and sea," and calls him "Missionary, Traveller, Philanthropist." It says that for thirty years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelise the native races, to explore the undiscovered secrets, and to abolish the desolating slave trade of Central Africa, and then presents, as among the last words he wrote, a

sentence that has been quoted ever since: a prayer, written in his solitude, that Heaven's blessing would come down on everyone, of whatever nation, who would help "to heal this open sore of the world."

The funeral was the beginning of a legend. Within a decade there were popular lives of Livingstone for every age and taste. Missions were founded in his name in what are now Malawi and Zambia, and towns, schools, hospitals and a waterfall-side city carried it. For the Victorian public he became a kind of Protestant saint: the mill boy who rose by hard work and faith, the doctor who healed Africans and freed slaves, the lonely hero who died on his knees.

What the Legend Says

A legend is not the same as a lie. Much of what the Victorians believed about Livingstone was true. He did rise from a cotton mill. He did cross Africa. He did hate the slave trade with all his heart. He did die, by the account of the men who found him, kneeling beside his bed.

But the legend says more than the evidence. It makes him a successful missionary, when he made one known convert. It makes him a discoverer of lakes and rivers that African people had lived beside for centuries, and that Portuguese and Arab traders had sometimes visited before him. It makes him a selfless family man, when his wife and children suffered for his choices. It makes him a gentle leader, when many who served with him found him hard, suspicious and unforgiving. It even improves his words. The inscription in the Abbey presents the "open sore" sentence as among his last written words, when in fact he wrote it a year before he died. A saying carved on many memorials, "I am prepared to go anywhere, provided it be forward," is a tidied version of something he wrote in a letter.

Another, "Fear God and work hard," is often given as his motto, though its source is less certain than the many plaques suggest.

The verse at the head of this introduction is Paul's description of the gospel and the people who carry it: a treasure in clay jars. Paul does not say that the jars are beautiful. He says they are breakable, and that this is the point, so that "the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves." A legend polishes the jar until no one notices the treasure. This book tries to show the jar as it was, cracked and stubborn and brave, and to let the reader decide what treasure it carried.

The Books He Wrote

Livingstone is unusual among missionaries in how much of his own record survives. His first book, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, published in November 1857, was a bestseller. It told the story of his first sixteen years in Africa and his journey across the continent. It is vivid, often funny, full of natural history, and frank about many things, including the failure of his mission among the Bakwena. It is also a book written by a man who had just resigned from his missionary society and needed the public's support for his next venture, and it is silent about much that was painful.

His second, the *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries* (1865), written with his brother Charles, told the story of the government expedition of 1858 to 1864. It is a more defensive book. It says little about the quarrels that broke the expedition apart, and less than it might about how badly things went.

The third was not written as a book at all. *The Last Journals of David Livingstone* (1874) were edited from his notebooks and journals by Horace Waller, a former member of the Universities' Mission who had become a

close friend. Waller worked with Susi and Chuma, two of the men who had carried Livingstone's body to the coast, to add an account of his last days. The journals are the most intimate record we have, but they passed through Waller's hands. Modern scholars, using new imaging techniques on Livingstone's faded field diaries, have shown that the published text sometimes smooths over what he first wrote, especially about the massacre at Nyangwe in 1871. Those discoveries are discussed in this book in their place.

The Witnesses Around Him

Two other early books are quoted here. W. G. Blaikie's *The Personal Life of David Livingstone* (1880) was written with the family's cooperation and printed many private letters and journal entries. Blaikie wanted to show the inner man, the man of prayer and family affection, and he did so, but he was protective. Henry Morton Stanley's *How I Found Livingstone* (1872) is the only full eyewitness account of Livingstone in his last years by an outsider. Stanley admired him deeply and wrote well, but he was a journalist who made his fortune from the story, and his own diaries do not always agree with his book.

There are other witnesses, and they matter. Livingstone's companions on the Zambezi expedition kept diaries and wrote letters that were not meant for publication. His wife's family wrote to him and about him. African witnesses speak less often in the written record, but they are there: in Sechele's own letters and statements, in the testimony of Susi, Chuma and the boy Majwara about his death, and in the diary that Jacob Wainwright kept on the journey to the coast. Where their voices survive, this book tries to listen to them.

The Historians

For more than a century after his death, Livingstone was written about mainly by admirers. In the later twentieth century, historians began to look again. They showed how his reputation had been made and used, how often his plans had failed, how hard he could be on those who worked with him, and how his call for "commerce and Christianity" was taken up by people with very different aims. Some went so far as to treat him as little more than a forerunner of empire. Others, especially historians of African Christianity, have restored a more complicated picture: a man whose campaign against the slave trade was sincere and costly, whose respect for many Africans was real, and whose example helped bring into being churches that Africans then made their own.

This book draws on that work for its facts, and it agrees with much of it. It also tells his life as a Christian biography, which means taking seriously something his critics often set aside: that Livingstone believed himself to be a servant of Christ, prayed, read his Bible, and judged himself by it. He could be wrong about what God wanted. He was rarely insincere about wanting it.

A Word About Words

Livingstone wrote in the language of his time. He used words for Africans that are offensive today, and he sometimes wrote about African customs with contempt. He also wrote, often and against the opinion of many of his countrymen, that Africans were in no way inferior to Europeans, and that the differences between peoples were the result of circumstances, not nature. Both things are true of him. This book uses the names African peoples use for themselves where it can, and gives his own words as he

wrote them only where they are needed, with a note where the language needs one.

Place names are another difficulty. Livingstone wrote Zambesi, Loanda, Quilimane, Nyassa and Tette; modern maps have Zambezi, Luanda, Quelimane, Nyasa (or Lake Malawi) and Tete. This book uses the modern spellings, except inside quotations and book titles.

What This Book Is For

The purpose of telling Livingstone's story honestly is not to bring him down. It is to see him clearly enough to learn from him. He has things to teach about perseverance, about the cost of a calling, about the slow work of God in places where nothing seems to happen, and about the ways in which good intentions can be borrowed by power. He also has things to warn us about: the danger of a vision that leaves no room for the people closest to us, and of a faith so sure of its direction that it stops listening. Paul's clay jar is breakable. That is why the treasure in it is worth looking for.

Shuttle Row

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; Yea, I have a goodly heritage."
— Psalm 16:6, ASV

A Room Above the Clyde

David Livingstone was born on 19 March 1813 at Blantyre Works, a cotton-spinning village on the south bank of the River Clyde, about eight miles south-east of Glasgow. The mills had been built in the 1780s by the Glasgow merchant David Dale, with the help of the inventor Richard Arkwright, and by Livingstone's childhood they belonged to the firm of Henry Monteith and Company. The village was a company village. The mill owned the houses, ran a school, and employed whole families, children included.

The Livingstones lived in Shuttle Row, a three-storey tenement built for the mill workers. Like most of its families, they had a single room. In it the parents slept, cooked, ate, read and prayed, and in it they raised their children. The room survives, as part of the David Livingstone Birthplace museum, and visitors are usually surprised by how small it is. It was a crowded, clean, disciplined home, and those who knew the family remembered it for its order.

David was the second of seven children born to Neil Livingstone and Agnes Hunter. Two of them died young. The survivors were John, the eldest, then David, then Janet, Charles and Agnes. Charles, eight years younger than David, would one day join him on the Zambezi. John emigrated to Canada. The two sisters, Janet and Agnes, never married, and in later years they kept house for their mother and looked after David's children while he was in Africa.

Ulva and Culloden

When Livingstone came to write his first book, he began it with an apology. He would rather, he said, write about Africa than about himself, and his own inclination was to say as little as possible about himself. But he gave his readers a few pages on his family, and they show what he was proud of.

The Livingstones came from the island of Ulva, off the west coast of Mull, in the Inner Hebrides. He wrote that his great-grandfather had fallen at the battle of Culloden, fighting for the old line of kings, and that his grandfather had been a small farmer in Ulva, where his father was born. Like thousands of Highlanders in the hard years at the end of the eighteenth century, the grandfather left the land and came south to find work. He was employed at the Blantyre mill, where the owners valued him as an honest man, and his sons grew up in the Lowlands.

Livingstone remembered his grandfather as a storehouse of Highland tradition, full of legends, songs and family history. One family story he cherished above all the others. An ancestor in Ulva, renowned in the island for wisdom, had called his children around him on his deathbed and told them that he had searched through all the traditions of the family and had never found a dishonest man among their forefathers. If any of them took

to dishonest ways, it would not be because it ran in their blood. The old man left them, as Livingstone told it, a single precept: to be honest.

It is the kind of story families keep because it tells them who they are. Livingstone kept it. Of all the family traditions, he wrote, this was the only point he felt proud of. He was a man who would be accused, later in life, of many things, of harshness and stubbornness and of telling the story of his journeys too kindly to himself. He was very rarely accused of dishonesty about money, and he carried the old Highland pride in plain dealing to the end.

Neil Livingstone

His father, Neil Livingstone, had been apprenticed as a tailor but disliked the trade, and for most of David's childhood he made a small living as a travelling tea dealer, going from house to house with packets of tea. It was a poor living. It suited him, his son thought, because it gave him the chance to leave tracts at the doors where he called. Neil Livingstone was a serious, devout and somewhat stern man, a total abstainer at a time when drink was the ruin of many working families, a Sunday-school teacher, and an eager reader of theology and missionary magazines.

He was strict about books. He believed that novels and light reading wasted time and endangered the soul, and he wanted his children to read religious works. David, who loved books about travel and science, resisted, and the result was a long quiet struggle in the house. Livingstone recalled, years later, that the last time his father beat him was for refusing to read Wilberforce's *Practical Christianity*, a book that he found dull and that seemed to him to set religion against the study of nature. The father won the argument about the beating and lost the argument about books. Science and travel would be the son's lifelong passion.

Yet Livingstone wrote of his father with deep respect. He thanked him for setting before his children, from their infancy, a consistent example of piety, of the kind Robert Burns had drawn in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, the poem in which a poor Scottish father gathers his family at the end of the week to read the Bible and pray. That was the kind of home Shuttle Row was. Neil Livingstone died in February 1856, while his son was still in Africa, on the last stage of his crossing of the continent, and David learned of it only on his voyage home. He had been looking forward to telling his father the story of the journey. It was one of the griefs of his life that he never could.

Later, when Neil Livingstone left the Church of Scotland for an Independent congregation in Hamilton, his son went with him. It was through that Independent church, and its connection with the London Missionary Society, that David would eventually go to Africa. The Society was not a denominational body. It was supported mainly by Congregationalists, and it had a rule, which Livingstone liked, of sending out missionaries to preach the gospel without imposing any particular form of church government on the people who received it.

Agnes Hunter

His mother, Agnes Hunter, came from a family of small tradespeople in the district, and from a line of Scottish Presbyterians who remembered the persecuted Covenanters of the seventeenth century with pride. Those who knew her described her as a small, neat, cheerful woman, careful with every penny, devoted to her husband and children. The order of the one-room home was hers. It was she who kept the family respectable on a tea seller's income, who cooked and mended and saved, and who sometimes, when

David was older, came and took the book out of his hands at midnight so that he would go to bed.

She lived until 1865, long enough to see her son famous and to see him leave for Africa for the last time. Livingstone loved her deeply, and his letters to her, plain and affectionate, are some of the most unguarded things he wrote. His elder daughter was named after her. When he was dragging out his last years in the interior, he sometimes wrote in his journal about his mother and father, and about Blantyre, as a man thinks about home when he does not expect to see it again.

A Goodly Heritage

It would be easy to make this sound idyllic, and it was not. The mill village was a place of long hours, crowded rooms, hard discipline and frequent death. Children worked in the mill from the age of ten or younger. Two of Neil and Agnes Livingstone's own children did not survive. The family was poor even by the standards of the village, because the father's tea round brought in less than the mill. When David went into the factory, it was because the family needed his wages.

But the psalm at the head of this chapter is not about wealth. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places," the psalmist says, and he means the boundary lines of his inheritance, the portion of land that was his. His real portion, he says a verse earlier, is God himself: "Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup" (Psalm 16:5, ASV). Livingstone inherited no land and no money. He inherited a Highland pride in honesty, a father's stern faith, a mother's cheerful thrift, and a house where the Bible was read every day and missionaries were spoken of with admiration. He also inherited, from both parents, an extraordinary capacity for hard work.

Some of what he inherited was less helpful. He grew up in a family that held firm opinions and did not easily change them, and in a tradition that valued duty above feeling. He learned early to keep his own counsel, to distrust idleness in others, and to judge harshly those who did not work as hard as he did. Those habits served him well in a mill and in the African interior. They served him much less well as a husband, a father and a leader of other men.

The Victorian biographers liked to draw a straight line from Shuttle Row to Westminster Abbey: the poor boy who rose by industry and faith. The line is real, but it is not straight. The boy from the single room carried his upbringing with him everywhere, for good and ill, and much of the story that follows is the story of how God used, and sometimes had to break, the man that Blantyre made.

The Village and the World

One more thing about Blantyre deserves notice. The mill that employed the Livingstone family spun cotton, and much of the raw cotton that came up the Clyde to the Scottish mills in those years had been grown by enslaved people in the American South. Britain had abolished the slave trade in its empire in 1807, six years before Livingstone was born, and would abolish slavery itself in its colonies in 1833, when he was twenty. But the textile industry of Lancashire and Lanarkshire still depended heavily on slave-grown cotton from the United States.

Livingstone did not write about this as a boy, and there is no sign that it troubled him then. But later in life he became convinced that if Africans could grow cotton and other crops for sale to British merchants, the demand for enslaved labour in Africa would fall, and the trade would wither. He imagined African cotton feeding the very mills he had worked

in. That idea, of fighting the slave trade with honest commerce, would shape his greatest journeys and his greatest failure. It had its roots, in part, in the village where he was born, where the whole of life turned on the price of cotton.

The Piecer

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest."
— Ecclesiastes 9:10, ASV

Six in the Morning Till Eight at Night

In 1823, at the age of ten, David Livingstone went to work in the Blantyre mill. He wrote that he was put into the factory at ten as a piecer, so that his earnings might lessen his mother's anxiety.

A piecer's job was to watch the threads on the spinning machines and to join them when they broke. The machines did not stop for a broken thread, so the boy had to reach in among the moving parts, catch the two ends and twist them together, then move on to the next. He spent the day walking up and down beside the machine, bending, reaching and watching. The work was not heavy, but it was relentless, and it was done in the heat and lint-filled air of a cotton mill, where the machinery roared so loudly that talk was almost impossible. The working day, Livingstone recorded, ran from six in the morning to eight at night, with short breaks for meals. He was a child. He did it for ten years.

Child labour in the mills is one of the great scandals of the British industrial revolution, and the reforming laws that began to limit it came

only during Livingstone's years in the factory. It is worth saying plainly that his childhood was hard and that it was hard because of a system that used up children for profit. Livingstone himself, characteristically, did not complain. He looked back on it as a school.

Ruddiman's Rudiments

The mill owners provided an evening school for their young workers, and Livingstone went to it. With part of his first week's wages, he recalled, he bought Ruddiman's *Rudiments of Latin*, and he went on studying Latin for years afterwards, with undiminished enthusiasm, at an evening school that met from eight until ten.

A boy who had been on his feet since six in the morning went from the factory floor to the schoolroom, and from the schoolroom to his books at home. The dictionary work, he wrote, went on till midnight or later, unless his mother intervened by jumping up and snatching the books out of his hands. Then he slept a few hours and was back at the mill by six. In this way, he said, he read many of the classical authors, and knew Virgil and Horace better at sixteen than he did in middle age.

He read at work too. The famous picture of the boy with his book on the spinning frame comes from his own pen. He wrote that he read at work by placing his book on part of the spinning-jenny, so that he could catch a sentence at a time as he passed at his work, and in this way kept up a fairly constant study, undisturbed by the roar of the machinery. Strictly, the machines at Blantyre were spinning mules, not jennies, but Livingstone used the common word. He added that the habit of concentrating in the noise of the factory gave him a power of shutting his mind to everything around him, so that later he could read and write in the middle of a crowd

of shouting people, or amid the dancing and singing of an African village, without being disturbed.

Many poor children in Scotland worked and studied in this way, and the country was proud of its self-educated working men. What marked Livingstone was not the habit but the intensity of it, and its persistence. He did not read in order to escape the mill. He read in order to master things: languages, then science, then medicine. He was already, at twelve and thirteen, a boy who would not let go of a task until it was done.

Rocks, Shells and Herbs

His great love, from boyhood, was the natural world. On the few free days of the year he went out into the country around Blantyre with his brothers, collecting plants, rocks and shells. He identified the plants he found with the help of old botany books. He was fascinated by the limestone quarries near the village, where the rock was full of fossil shells. He once asked a quarryman how the shells had got into the rocks. The man, he recalled, looked at him with the pitying expression people reserve for a harmless lunatic. The boy did not get an answer, but he never stopped asking that kind of question.

This curiosity about the created world was part of his religion, though for some years it seemed to him to be in conflict with it. His father distrusted science books. The theology of his father's church seemed to have no room for geology. David read whatever science he could find, including books on chemistry and astronomy, and for a time he was troubled by the thought that he could not be a Christian and love these things too. How he came through that trouble is the story of the next chapter.

Promotion to the Wheel

In his nineteenth year, about 1832, he was promoted from piecer to spinner. The work was harder and the pay better. Spinning, he wrote, was exceedingly hard on a slim, loose-jointed lad, but it was well paid. The better pay was important, because by then he had decided what he wanted to do with his life, and it would cost money. For the next few years he worked in the mill in the summer and studied in Glasgow in the winter, paying his own fees and living on almost nothing.

He was proud of having done it without help. He wrote later that he had never received a farthing of aid from anyone, and that he would have reached his goal by his own efforts in the end, if friends had not advised him to apply to the London Missionary Society. There is a characteristic note in that pride. It is the pride of a man who has earned everything he has and who finds it hard to understand people who have not had to.

The Same Hardy Training

Many years later, in the opening pages of *Missionary Travels*, written when he was the most famous traveller in Britain, Livingstone looked back on the mill with gratitude. Looking back on that life of toil, he wrote, he could only feel thankful that it had formed so large a part of his early education, and if it were possible he would like to begin life over again in the same lowly way and pass through the same hardy training.

That passage has been quoted ever since as an example of Victorian self-help, and it is easy to be cynical about it. It was written by a man who had escaped the mill, for readers who had never been in one. It can be read as a comfortable endorsement of child labour by someone who no longer had to do it.

But Livingstone meant something more particular. He believed that the factory had given him two things that he needed in Africa. The first was endurance. He had learned, as a child, to work through tiredness for fourteen hours a day, and it was that endurance that carried him across the continent. The second was a working man's sympathy for the poor. He said more than once that his time in the mill had taught him to respect working people and to understand their lives, and that he never forgot it. In Africa, he dealt with chiefs and porters, traders and slaves, and he was often more at ease with the porters than with the officials. He knew what it was to work for someone else.

There is a third thing the factory gave him, which he did not mention. It taught him to measure himself, and others, by work done. In the mill a man was what he produced. In Africa, Livingstone would judge his companions by the same standard, and those who could not keep up with him, or who seemed to him idle, he despised. A missionary needs endurance. He also needs patience with the weak, and that is harder to learn at a spinning frame.

With Thy Might

The verse at the head of this chapter comes from Ecclesiastes, the book of the Bible most aware of the shortness and frustration of human life. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." The Preacher does not say this because work always succeeds. He says it because life is short and death is coming, and there will be no work in the grave. It is a sober verse, not a cheerful one.

Livingstone lived it all his life. He worked with his might in the mill, in the classroom, in the dispensary, on the road and in the swamp. The Preacher would have recognised him. He might also have reminded him of

something else he says, that there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak," and "a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing" (Ecclesiastes 3:5, 7, ASV). Livingstone was much better at doing things with his might than at knowing when to stop. Paul gives the same command a gentler setting: "whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23, ASV). The mill taught him to work heartily. It would take the rest of his life to learn what it meant to work as unto the Lord, and to leave the results with him.

Colour Blindness Cured

"The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork."
— Psalm 19:1, ASV

Doctrine Without Life

David Livingstone grew up knowing the gospel. His parents taught it to him, he heard it every Sunday, and he could have explained the doctrines of the Scottish catechism as well as any boy in Blantyre. But in his teens he found that knowing the doctrine was not the same as possessing what it described. His account of what happened next, written twenty years later in the opening pages of *Missionary Travels*, is brief and careful, and it is the only account of his conversion that he ever published.

His parents, he wrote, had taken great pains to teach him the doctrines of Christianity, and he had no difficulty understanding the theory of free salvation through the atonement of Christ. But it was only at about this time, in his late teens, that he really began to feel his own need of that atonement, and the value of applying it personally to his own case.

It is the language of a nineteenth-century Scottish Protestant, and it is worth reading slowly. Livingstone does not say that he discovered a new doctrine. He says that a doctrine he already believed became his own. The atonement of Christ, which had been a theory, became something he

needed and received personally. The story has none of the drama of a sudden conversion. There is no single night, no sermon, no named preacher. There is a young man who knew the truth and came, over a period of months or years, to rest his own life on it.

The Trouble With Science

What had held him back, he later suggested, was the apparent conflict between his faith and his love of the natural world. His father's religion was suspicious of science, and some of the preachers he heard seemed to set Christianity against the study of geology and astronomy. A boy who wanted to know how shells got into limestone could easily conclude that he had to choose between his Bible and his rocks. For a time, Livingstone seems to have felt that he could not be a real Christian without giving up the questions he loved, and that he was not willing to give them up.

The book that helped him was Thomas Dick's *The Philosophy of a Future State*. Dick was a Scottish minister, schoolteacher and amateur astronomer who wrote popular books arguing that science and Christianity were allies, not enemies. The universe, he taught, was God's handiwork, and the study of it was a form of worship. The more we learn about the creation, the more we see of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Livingstone read Dick and found that the wall he had imagined between faith and science was not there. He could love both, because they had the same author.

He later visited Dick at his home near Dundee, and he never lost the outlook he learned from him. For the rest of his life, Livingstone saw no contradiction between his work as a missionary and his work as a naturalist and geographer. He collected plants, measured rainfall, studied the habits of animals, took astronomical observations to fix his position, and wrote

about African geology and disease, and he regarded all of it as part of the same calling. The psalm at the head of this chapter would have been one of his favourites: "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork." When he lay on his back in the African night, with a sextant in his hand, working out his latitude from the stars, he was, as he understood it, reading God's other book.

This conviction is one of the most attractive things about him, and also one of the sources of his later difficulties. Because he saw exploration and science as part of his missionary calling, he could pursue them with a clear conscience long after his supporters began to think he had stopped being a missionary at all. He was never able to see what they were complaining about.

Like Colour Blindness

He described the change that came over him with an image from medicine. It was like what might happen, he wrote, if it were possible to cure a case of colour blindness. A colour-blind person sees everything that others see, but not as they see it. Shapes and objects are all there, but something essential is missing. Then, if such a thing were possible, the colours come. Nothing new appears in the world, but the whole world looks different.

That is a striking way for a scientifically minded young man to describe conversion, and it is accurate to the experience of many believers. Livingstone did not say that he saw new things. He said that he saw the same things truly. The doctrines he had learned as a child now had colour. The created world he loved now had colour. And so, he went on to say, did the needs of other people.

The Alleviation of Human Misery

In the glow of love that Christianity inspires, he wrote, he soon resolved to devote his life to the relief of human misery.

The sentence moves directly from conversion to service. Livingstone does not describe a period of private devotion first, or a slow growth in holiness. He describes a heart warmed by love, and a resolution to spend that love on others. It is a very practical Christianity, and a very Scottish one. Love, for him, was something you did.

The question was where to do it. The answer came from China. Around 1834, an appeal was circulated in Britain by Karl Gützlaff, a German missionary in China, for medical missionaries to go to that country. Gützlaff argued that doctors could gain an entrance for the gospel where preachers could not, by healing the sick and so winning the trust of the people. The appeal reached the Livingstone household. Neil Livingstone was enthusiastic. His son, who had been thinking of a life of service but had no clear direction, now had one. He would become a doctor and go to China.

Turning the idea over, he wrote, he came to feel that to be a pioneer of Christianity in China might bring material benefit to parts of that immense empire, and so he set himself to gain a medical education to qualify for the work. The word pioneer is already there. Livingstone never wanted to go where others had been. From the beginning he wanted to be first.

Glasgow

In the winter of 1836, at the age of twenty-three, he went to Glasgow to study. He enrolled at the Andersonian University, a college founded to bring science and medicine to people who could not afford the ancient

universities, and attended classes in medicine and chemistry. He also took Greek at the University of Glasgow, and theology under Ralph Wardlaw, a leading Congregational minister. He lived in a cheap rented room and walked the eight miles home to Blantyre at weekends. In the summer he went back to the mill to earn the money for the next winter's fees.

At the Andersonian he made a lifelong friend. James Young was the assistant to the professor of chemistry, Thomas Graham, and he and Livingstone became close. Young would later make a fortune from the refining of paraffin oil, and he became one of Livingstone's most generous supporters, paying for much of his last expedition. In the laboratory the two young men worked side by side, and Livingstone learned, among other things, to make and mend scientific instruments. It was the kind of practical skill he valued above all, and it served him in Africa, where there was no one to mend anything if he could not.

He was a serious, quiet student, more interested in learning than in making friends, and he left little mark on the college except in the memory of a few classmates. He was not brilliant. He was tenacious. He passed his examinations by the same method he had used in the mill: he simply went on working after everyone else had stopped.

The Society

By 1837 he had come to see that he could not pay for a full medical training by himself, and friends urged him to apply to a missionary society. He chose the London Missionary Society, partly because of its link with his father's Independent church, and partly because of its principles. He approved of the Society's own description of itself: that it sent to the heathen neither episcopacy, nor presbyterianism, nor independency, but the gospel of Christ. That, he said, agreed exactly with his idea of what a

missionary society ought to do. He did not want to export a Scottish denomination. He wanted to preach Christ.

The word heathen in that description was the ordinary word of his time for people who were not Christians, Jews or Muslims, and it carried a sense of moral and cultural inferiority that most readers today would reject. Livingstone used it all his life, as almost all his contemporaries did. It is used here because it was his. It is worth noticing that his concern, even in this early statement, was that the gospel should not arrive dressed in the clothes of a particular European church. That concern did not always survive his later enthusiasm for British influence, but it was there from the beginning.

He filled in the Society's application papers early in 1838. One of them asked about his religious experience and his motives. He answered with the same plain seriousness he would show all his life, describing his wish to make known the gospel by teaching and example, and his hope to combine it with medicine. The directors liked what they read. In the summer of 1838 he was summoned to London for interview, and accepted on probation.

The Glory of God in His Works

Psalm 19 has two halves. The first praises God for the heavens and the sun, which speak without words to every nation. The second praises God for his law: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul" (Psalm 19:7, ASV). The psalmist does not set the two halves against each other. The God who made the sun also gave the law, and both reveal him.

Livingstone came to faith when he saw that this was true. He did not have to choose between the God of his father's Bible and the God of the rocks and stars. They were the same God, and he could serve him with his whole mind. That conviction made him a missionary who never stopped

being a scientist, and a scientist who never stopped praying. It also gave him a confidence that God's purposes and his own curiosity would usually point in the same direction. Sometimes they did. In the years ahead, there would be times when it was very hard to tell the difference.

Slow of Speech

"And Moses said unto Jehovah, Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."
— Exodus 4:10, ASV

Ongar

The London Missionary Society did not send its candidates straight to the field. In September 1838, Livingstone was sent with several other probationers to Chipping Ongar, a small town in Essex, to study under the Reverend Richard Cecil, a Congregational minister who prepared young men for the Society. They lived in lodgings in the town, studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew and theology with Cecil, and took turns preaching in the village chapels around about. Cecil reported on each of them to the Society's secretary in London. Those letters survive, and they show that Livingstone came close to being sent home.

The problem was not his character, which Cecil admired, or his learning, which was adequate. It was his manner. Livingstone was awkward, shy in company, and hesitant in public prayer and speech. He spoke with a broad Lanarkshire accent and a thick, slow delivery that Londoners found hard to follow. Cecil wrote that he had sense and quiet vigour and that his temper was good, but that he was heavy in manner and

his prayers were not what a minister's should be. Early in 1839 he recommended that Livingstone's probation should be extended before the Society made up its mind.

A Sermon Forgotten

A story told by his biographer Blaikie, from the memory of those who knew him at Ongar, shows why. Livingstone was sent one Sunday to preach in the chapel at a village near Ongar, in place of a minister who was ill. He had written out his sermon and learned it. He went into the pulpit, read out his text, and then found that his mind was completely empty. After a painful silence, by Blaikie's account, he told the congregation that he had forgotten everything he had meant to say, and came down from the pulpit and left the chapel.

It is a story that later admirers liked to tell for its humility, and it is worth taking seriously for what it reveals. Livingstone was never a good preacher. He knew it, and so did everyone who heard him. In Africa he would preach in Setswana, a language he came to speak well, and some who heard him there found him plain and moving. But he never had the gifts that the Victorian church valued most in a minister, and he never pretended to. When he became famous and was asked to speak to great crowds in Britain, he did it badly, read his speeches, and hated it.

The verse at the head of this chapter is Moses's protest at the burning bush. God has told him to go to Pharaoh, and Moses says that he cannot speak. God's answer is not to make him eloquent. It is to remind him who made his mouth: "Who hath made man's mouth? ... is it not I, Jehovah? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth" (Exodus 4:11-12, ASV). Moses was given Aaron to speak for him, and he went. Livingstone was never made eloquent either. But God did not need him to be a great

preacher. He needed him to walk, and to write, and to tell the world what he had seen, and he was given gifts for that.

A Night Walk

A fellow student at Ongar, Joseph Moore, later remembered another side of him. Moore told Blaikie that Livingstone once walked to London on an errand for his family, a journey of over twenty miles, and set out to walk back the same day. On the road home in the dark, he found a woman who had been thrown from a gig, and he stopped to help her, carrying her to a house nearby and making sure she was cared for before he went on. He lost his way, and reached Ongar at last in the early morning, utterly exhausted. Moore said he had never seen him look so done in. It is a small story, and we have it only at second hand, but it fits everything else we know of him: the endurance, the practical kindness, the refusal to pass by someone who was hurt. Livingstone could not preach a sermon about the Good Samaritan from memory. He could be one in the dark on a country road.

In the end the Society's directors decided that his strengths outweighed his weaknesses. He was accepted in 1839, and sent to London to complete his medical training.

China Closed

He had offered himself for China, and while he was at Ongar the door closed. In 1839 the long dispute between Britain and China over the British opium trade turned into war. Britain was fighting to force the Chinese government to allow British merchants to sell opium, grown in British India, to Chinese people. It was one of the most shameful wars in British

history, and it made missionary work in China impossible for the time being.

Livingstone could not wait. The Society suggested the West Indies, but he did not want to go where there was already an established church and a settled ministry. He wanted to go where the gospel was not known. It was in London, in the winter of 1839 to 1840, that he found his direction.

Robert Moffat

Robert Moffat was the most famous missionary in Britain. A Scottish gardener by training, he had gone to southern Africa for the London Missionary Society in 1816 and built a station at Kuruman, on the southern edge of the Kalahari, among the Batlhaping people. He had learned Setswana and was translating the Bible into it, and he was in Britain from 1839 to 1843 to raise support and see his New Testament through the press. His book *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* appeared in 1842 and was widely read.

Livingstone met him in London and was captivated. According to the account Moffat gave Blaikie many years later, Livingstone asked him whether he thought he would do for Africa. Moffat said that he would, if he would not go to an old station but would push on to the vast unoccupied country to the north, where, Moffat said, he had sometimes seen in the morning sun the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary had ever been.

That phrase became part of the Livingstone legend, and later storytellers embroidered it. One popular version has a boy pumping the bellows of a church organ, hidden in the loft, who hears a visiting missionary describe the smoke of a thousand villages and resolves to go. There is no evidence for the organ loft. The phrase itself comes from

Moffat's later memory of a private conversation. It is the kind of thing Moffat might well have said, and it fits what Livingstone did next, but it should be held lightly.

What is certain is that Moffat pointed him north, beyond Kuruman, to the peoples of the interior who had never heard the gospel, and that Livingstone accepted the direction at once. The Society agreed to send him to southern Africa.

Doctor and Minister

He spent 1840 completing his medical studies in London, attending lectures and hospital practice, and in November he went back to Glasgow to take his medical qualification, as a Licentiate of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. He had very little time at home. Blaikie records the last night: father and son sat up talking about the prospects of missions, and the next morning the family rose at five. David read Psalm 121 and Psalm 135 at family worship, and prayed. Then his father walked with him to Glasgow, where he took the steamer for Liverpool. They never saw each other again.

Psalm 121 was a natural choice for a family saying goodbye to a son they did not expect to see for many years: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: From whence cometh my help? My help cometh from Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2, ASV). It ends with a promise that the Livingstones took literally: "Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in From this time forth and for evermore" (Psalm 121:8, ASV).

He was ordained as a missionary on 20 November 1840 at Albion Chapel in London, together with another candidate, and on 8 December he sailed from London on the *George*, bound for the Cape of Good Hope. He was twenty-seven.

Lunars on the George

The voyage took three months, and Livingstone used it as he used everything. The ship's captain taught him to take lunar observations, measuring the angle between the moon and a star to work out longitude, a difficult skill that would become the foundation of his reputation as a geographer. He sat up at night with the captain on deck, learning to use the sextant. He also tried, with little success by his own account, to interest the crew in the gospel.

The *George* called at Rio de Janeiro on the way, and Livingstone went ashore to see the city, his first sight of the tropics. Then the ship sailed on, and in March 1841 it reached Simon's Bay, near Cape Town.

The Mouth God Made

At the Cape he met John Philip, the Society's superintendent in southern Africa, a controversial figure who had spent years campaigning for the rights of the Khoikhoi and other African peoples against the colonial government and the settlers. Livingstone took a dislike to the arrangements at the Cape, as he would to most church arrangements, and was glad to leave. He sailed round to Algoa Bay and went north by ox-wagon, a journey of several hundred miles at the slow pace of the oxen. On 31 July 1841 he arrived at Kuruman.

He was a doctor who had trained in a hurry, a minister who could not preach from memory, and a young man with no experience of any country but his own. What he had was a strong body, a stubborn will, a working knowledge of medicine, a sextant he had learned to use on the voyage, and a faith that the God who had made his mouth would be with it. Moses, too, began badly. "Oh, Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou

wilt send," he said, which is to say, send someone else (Exodus 4:13, ASV). God sent him anyway. Livingstone never asked to be excused. He only asked to be sent further.

Another Man's Foundation

"yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation."
— Romans 15:20, ASV

Kuruman

Kuruman, when Livingstone arrived in July 1841, was the most famous mission station in southern Africa. It lay in dry country on the southern edge of the Kalahari, where a strong spring, the "Eye" of the Kuruman River, rose out of the limestone. Robert Moffat and his colleagues had led its water into channels and planted gardens and orchards. A stone church, large enough for hundreds, had been finished in 1838. There was a printing press, on which Moffat was printing the Scriptures in Setswana, and a school. The people of the station were mostly Batlhaping, one of the Setswana-speaking peoples, and a congregation of believers had been gathered over twenty years of patient work.

Livingstone was disappointed. He had expected, perhaps from Moffat's descriptions in London, a large population, and he found a small one, scattered across dry country. He wrote home that the number of people within reach was far smaller than he had imagined, and that the Society had too many missionaries crowded into the south while vast regions to the

north had none. It was a judgement that was partly right and partly unfair, and it was typical of him. He did not see what twenty years of work had cost. He saw what had not yet been done.

Moffat himself was still in Britain, and Livingstone was under orders to wait at Kuruman until he returned, and then to go north with him to choose a new station. He did not wait long. Within a few months he was asking permission to travel, and by the end of 1841 he was on the road.

Not Where Christ Was Named

The verse at the head of this chapter is Paul's statement of his own missionary aim, in the letter to the Romans: to preach the gospel "not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation." Livingstone took this as his own principle. He wanted to go where no missionary had been. It was not that he despised the work at Kuruman. He thought that it was done, or at least that it could be done by others, and that his calling was to go beyond it.

Paul's words were not a criticism of other missionaries. Paul was explaining why he had not yet visited Rome, where a church already existed, and why he wanted to go on to Spain. He was also, in the same chapter, collecting money for the poor believers in Jerusalem, a church he had not founded, and he was eager to be refreshed by the Roman Christians on his way. Paul's pioneering was part of a fellowship. Livingstone's, increasingly, was not. He came to regard the established stations, and many of the men who served at them, with impatience, and he said so in letters to the Society's directors in terms that his colleagues found hurtful when they heard of them. He was right that the interior needed the gospel. He was less right about the people who had spent their lives on the edge of it.

The First Journeys

His first journey north, late in 1841, was made with Rogers Edwards, an older missionary at Kuruman who had come out as an artisan and been ordained in the field. They travelled by ox-wagon into the country of the Bakwena and other Setswana-speaking peoples, several hundred miles to the north and north-east. Livingstone found that the people were eager to receive a missionary, and particularly a doctor, and that his medicine gave him an entrance everywhere he went.

In 1842 he went north again, this time with a few African companions from Kuruman and without any European. He travelled farther than any missionary had done in that direction, as far as the town of Sekgoma, the chief of the Bamangwato, and he visited a people called the Bakaa, who had a reputation among Europeans for violence towards travellers. He walked among them without weapons, slept in their village, and treated their sick. Nothing happened to him. It was the first of many occasions on which Livingstone found that the dangers Europeans feared in the interior were smaller than they imagined, if a traveller came openly and in peace.

It was on these early journeys that he first met Sechele, the young chief of the Bakwena, who would become the most important African in the first half of his life. That meeting, and what came of it, is the subject of a later chapter.

Six Months Without English

Livingstone saw at once that he could do nothing without the language. Setswana was the language of all the peoples of the region, and Moffat had already given it a written form. But most missionaries learned it slowly, at the station, from books and interpreters, and spoke it badly all their lives.

Livingstone decided to do it differently. He wrote that he cut himself off from all European society for about six months, living among the Bakwena at a place called Lepelole, so that he would be forced to hear and speak nothing but Setswana. He gained, he said, by this ordeal, an insight into the habits, ways of thinking, laws and language of the people that proved of incalculable advantage in his later dealings with them.

It was a remarkable thing to do, and few missionaries of his time would have done it. At Lepelole he also tried to help the people with practical work, persuading them to dig a channel to bring water to their gardens. He treated the sick, who came to him in large numbers. He preached, at first through an interpreter and then in his own halting Setswana. He also watched and listened, and his letters and journals from these years are full of careful observations about the lives of the people around him: how they farmed, how they hunted, how their chiefs governed, how they settled disputes.

Native Agents

Out of these journeys came the first of Livingstone's large ideas about missions. He became convinced that the gospel would spread through Africa not mainly by European missionaries, who were few, expensive and often sick, but by African Christians. Europeans should go ahead, open the way, and train African teachers, who would then carry the message to their own people far more effectively than any foreigner could. In the language of his time, he called them native agents.

The idea was not new. Moffat and others had used African evangelists for years, and the London Missionary Society had long believed in it. But Livingstone pressed it with unusual force. He thought that the European missionaries at Kuruman and the older stations were holding back African

converts from responsibility, and he urged the Society to place African teachers in the villages of the interior. It was one of his best insights, and the later history of African Christianity proved him right: the churches of southern and central Africa were built far more by African evangelists, catechists and teachers than by Europeans. He did not always follow his own insight. In practice, as we shall see, his own work rested heavily on African Christians such as Mebalwe, and he gave them less space in his books than they deserved.

Seeing and Not Seeing

Reading Livingstone's letters from these first years, one is struck by two things together. The first is his openness. He liked the people he met, he enjoyed their company and their humour, and he respected their intelligence. He wrote, against the racial theories that were becoming fashionable in Britain, that Africans were in no way inferior to Europeans in natural ability. He took their questions seriously, including their objections to Christianity. He was happier sleeping in an African village than at a mission station.

The second is the limits of his openness. He saw African religion almost entirely as darkness and superstition, and he had little patience with the customs that bound African societies together: the initiation schools, the role of rainmakers, the marriage of several wives by chiefs and wealthy men. He believed that Christianity would replace them, and he expected that it would come with what he called civilisation, which meant in practice many of the habits of a Scottish working family: square houses, clothes, ploughs, regular work and trade with Britain. He did not see how much of this was culture rather than gospel.

That is not a reason to dismiss him. Almost every missionary of his generation thought the same way, and so did most of their critics. But it is a reason to read him with care. Livingstone saw the people around him more clearly than most Europeans of his time. He did not see them as clearly as he thought he did.

The Edge of the Map

By 1843 he had persuaded the Society to let him found a new station in the north. With Rogers Edwards he chose a site at Mabotsa, in a pleasant valley among the Bakgatla people of a chief named Mosielele, some two hundred miles north-east of Kuruman. He built a house there with his own hands and began work.

He was thirty years old. He had been in Africa for two years. He spoke Setswana, he had travelled farther north than any other missionary from Kuruman, and he had a reputation among the Batswana as a healer. He was also restless, impatient with his colleagues, and already looking beyond the station he had just begun. Paul's words in Romans end with a plan: "whensoever I go unto Spain" (Romans 15:24, ASV). Paul never got there, as far as we know. Livingstone's Spain was always over the next horizon, and he would spend the rest of his life walking towards it.

The Lion at Mabotsa

"But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."
— 2 Timothy 4:17, ASV

The Lions of the Valley

Mabotsa was a beautiful place, a valley among hills, with good water and the large town of the Bakgatla people under their chief, Mosielele. It was also, in 1843 and 1844, troubled by lions. They came down at night and attacked the cattle in their enclosures, and sometimes in daylight. The Bakgatla believed, Livingstone wrote, that the lions had been sent against them by a neighbouring people, through witchcraft. He thought the real reason was simpler: the lions were bold because the people had not killed one, and if one could be killed the others would go. In February 1844, when the lions killed several cattle, he went out with the men of the town to encourage them in the hunt.

What happened next is the most famous incident in his life before Stanley, and he told it himself in *Missionary Travels*, thirteen years later, with a calm that is almost comic. The men surrounded a small wooded hill where the lions were lying. Livingstone saw one of them sitting on a rock, and fired both barrels of his gun into it. The men, however, did not close in

to finish it, and Livingstone turned to go after them. He was reloading when he heard a shout.

Like a Terrier With a Rat

"Starting, and looking half round," he wrote, "I saw the lion just in the act of springing upon me." He was standing on a little rise, he went on; the lion caught him by the shoulder as it sprang, they fell to the ground together, and, growling horribly close to his ear, it shook him as a terrier shakes a rat.

He went on to describe, with a doctor's detachment, what he felt. The shock, he said, produced a stupor like that of a mouse in the jaws of a cat. It brought on a kind of dreaminess, in which he felt neither pain nor terror, though he was fully aware of everything that was happening. He compared it to the state described by patients under chloroform, who see the surgeon's knife but do not feel it. He was able to turn his head and see the lion's paw on the back of his head, and its eyes directed at someone else.

The someone else was Mebalwe. Livingstone's account names him only in passing, as the native schoolmaster, but Mebalwe was one of the most important people at Mabotsa. He was a Christian teacher from Kuruman who had come north with Livingstone to help found the station, and he was doing much of the day-to-day work of teaching and evangelism there. Standing some yards away, Mebalwe raised his gun and tried to fire at the lion. Both barrels misfired. The lion left Livingstone, sprang at Mebalwe, and bit him in the thigh. Another man, whom Livingstone had earlier rescued from a buffalo, tried to spear the lion, and the lion caught him by the shoulder. Then, at last, the bullets Livingstone had fired at the beginning took effect, and the lion fell dead.

The whole thing, Livingstone said, took only a few moments. Besides crushing the bone into splinters, he wrote, the lion left eleven tooth

wounds in the upper part of his arm.

Courage That Is Not His

The lion story was told for a century as an example of Livingstone's courage, and he was certainly brave. But it is worth noticing whose courage saved his life. Mebalwe ran towards the lion with a gun that failed, knowing what had just happened to the man on the ground. The other man ran at it with a spear. Both were badly hurt. Both, as far as we know, recovered. Neither was famous. In the Victorian retellings Mebalwe is often left out altogether, and the lion simply lets go of the missionary.

That pattern will recur throughout this book. Again and again, Livingstone's survival depended on the courage, skill and loyalty of Africans whose names appear in his books, if at all, as footnotes. It was Mebalwe who saved him at Mabotsa, as it was Makololo men who carried him to the Atlantic and back, and Susi, Chuma and their companions who carried him, dead, to the coast. A Christian reading of his life should notice them, because God noticed them.

A Merciful Provision

Livingstone drew a theological lesson from the experience, and it is characteristic of his way of seeing the world. The dreaminess he had felt in the lion's jaws, he thought, was probably felt by all animals killed by predators. He suggested that this strange state was probably produced in all animals killed by beasts of prey, and if so, that it was a merciful provision of a kind Creator for lessening the pain of death.

A modern reader may find that too tidy. The natural world, red in tooth and claw, raises harder questions for Christian faith than Livingstone

allowed here, and he would come to see a great deal more suffering than a single lion attack. But it is worth noticing what he did. He did not see God only in his rescue. He looked for God in the experience of being attacked, and found, as he believed, a sign of kindness even there. The psalmist says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4, ASV). Livingstone had walked a short way into that valley, and he reported that it was not as terrible as he had feared.

The verse at the head of this chapter is from Paul's last letter, written from prison in Rome, near the end of his life. At his first trial, Paul says, no one stood with him; everyone deserted him. "But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me ... and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Paul's lion was almost certainly a figure of speech, for danger or for the Roman authorities. Livingstone's was real. But the point is the same in both cases: God delivered his servant, not for the servant's sake, but "that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear." Livingstone believed he had been spared for a purpose. That belief would carry him through many later dangers. It would also, at times, make him reckless.

A Crooked Arm

There was no other doctor within hundreds of miles, and Livingstone had to direct the setting of his own arm. It was done badly. The bone did not knit properly, and a false joint formed in the upper arm. He was ill for weeks with the wounds, and he could never afterwards lift his left arm above the level of his shoulder. He had to learn to fire a gun from his left shoulder, and every heavy load or fall reminded him of the lion. Thirty

years later, when his body was brought home to London, the surgeons who examined it identified him by that false joint.

He went to Kuruman to recover. The Moffats had come back from Britain at the end of 1843, and their eldest daughter, Mary, had come with them.

Mary Moffat

Mary Moffat was born at Griquatown, in the northern Cape, in April 1821, the eldest child of Robert and Mary Moffat. She had grown up at Kuruman, been educated partly at the Cape, and spent the last few years in England with her parents. She was twenty-three, practical, capable and reserved. She spoke Setswana from childhood, knew the country and the people, and understood exactly what the life of a missionary's wife involved, because she had watched her mother live it. She was teaching in the infant school at Kuruman.

Livingstone, recovering from the lion, spent the spring of 1844 at Kuruman, and he and Mary were engaged in the middle of the year. His letters about the engagement are notoriously unromantic. He described her to friends in terms of her practical qualities rather than her charms, and he seems to have been at least partly guided by the thought that a missionary in the interior needed a wife who knew the country. That is not the whole story. His later letters to her show real tenderness, and after her death he wrote that he had loved her when he married her and loved her more the longer he lived with her. But the marriage began with a missionary's calculation as well as a young man's affection, and it would be shaped all its life by the priority he gave to his work.

They were married at Kuruman on 9 January 1845, and they went north together to Mabotsa.

A Quarrel and a Departure

Mabotsa did not last. Rogers Edwards, the older missionary with whom Livingstone had founded the station, came to resent him. Edwards felt that Livingstone had taken credit for the station in his letters to the Society, and that he treated him as an inferior. Livingstone, for his part, thought Edwards slow and petty. The quarrel was bitter, and it went to the Society's district committee. Livingstone was not wholly in the wrong; Edwards seems to have been a difficult colleague. But it was a pattern that would recur: Livingstone could not easily work beside another European as an equal.

His solution was characteristic. Rather than continue the dispute, he gave up the house he had built with his own hands and left Mabotsa to Edwards. In 1845 he and Mary moved some forty miles away, to Chonuane, the town of the Bakwena and their chief Sechele, whom Livingstone had met on his first journeys and who had asked him to come. There, at last, he would have a people and a chief of his own, and no colleague to share them with. It was there that the most important relationship of his missionary life began.

Sechele

"And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him."
— Acts 8:30-31, ASV

A Chief Who Had Lost and Won

Sechele was about Livingstone's age, a tall, intelligent and forceful man who had become chief of the Bakwena after a childhood of danger and exile. His father, the chief Motswasele, had been murdered by his own people when Sechele was a boy, and the young heir had grown up as a refugee. He had regained his chieftainship with the help of Sebetwane, the leader of the Makololo, a people from the south who had fought their way north across the Kalahari to the Zambezi. Sechele was a skilled hunter, a shrewd politician and, by the custom of his people, a rainmaker, responsible through ritual for bringing the rain on which everyone's life depended. He had several wives, as chiefs did, and through them a web of alliances with leading families of the Bakwena.

He was also, as Livingstone soon discovered, one of the most eager learners he would ever meet. Livingstone wrote that Sechele learned the alphabet on the first day of his residence at Chonuane. Within a short time

he was reading, and once he could read, he read the Bible with an appetite that astonished his teacher. His favourite book was Isaiah. Livingstone remembered him saying that Isaiah was a fine man who knew how to speak. Livingstone noted with amusement that from so much sitting over his books the chief, once spare and active, grew stout.

The verse at the head of this chapter is about another African statesman reading Isaiah, the treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia, sitting in his chariot on the road home from Jerusalem. Philip the evangelist ran up beside him and asked whether he understood what he was reading. "How can I," the official replied, "except some one shall guide me?" For a few years at Chonuane and Kolobeng, Livingstone and Sechele sat side by side in the same way. It was the nearest thing to a real missionary partnership that Livingstone ever had. It ended, as we shall see, in grief on both sides.

All My Bones to Shake

Sechele did not receive the gospel passively. He asked hard questions, and Livingstone, to his credit, recorded some of them. When he first heard Livingstone describe the coming judgement, he was deeply troubled, and asked a question that missionaries have heard all over the world. As Livingstone told it, Sechele said, "You startle me: these words make all my bones to shake," and that he had no strength left in him. Then he asked why, if Livingstone's forefathers had been alive at the same time as his own, they had not sent word of these terrible things sooner. His ancestors, he said, had all passed away into darkness without knowing where they were going.

Livingstone did not record a satisfying answer, because there is none that removes the force of the question. He mentioned the geographical difficulties, and said that he hoped Christianity would spread. Sechele was

not consoled. His question is still asked, and it deserves to be heard as he asked it: not as a debating point, but as grief for his own people, the parents and grandparents who had died without hearing what he was now being told mattered more than anything. It is also a rebuke to the Church that took eighteen centuries to reach the Bakwena.

The Whips of Rhinoceros Hide

Sechele was a chief, and he thought like one. Once he was persuaded that Christianity was true, he wanted his people to accept it, and he could not understand why Livingstone did not simply tell them to. Livingstone recorded his offer with obvious affection for the man who made it.

Did Livingstone imagine, Sechele asked, that the people would ever believe merely because he talked to them? Sechele himself could make them do nothing except by beating them. If Livingstone liked, he would call his headmen, and with their *litupa*, whips of rhinoceros hide, they would soon make everyone believe together.

Livingstone refused, and he was right to refuse. Faith cannot be beaten into anyone. But Sechele's offer was not foolish. In the society he governed, a chief's religious choices were not private. He was responsible for the rain, the harvest, the initiation of the young, and the rituals that held the people together. If he changed his religion, everything changed, and the people expected to follow their chief or to resist him. Livingstone's idea of individual conversion, one soul at a time, each person freely choosing, was a Protestant European idea that made little sense to the Bakwena. Sechele was trying to tell him how his world worked. Livingstone heard the offer as a charming mistake. It was also good political advice, and it explains a great deal about what happened next.

The Drought

Chonuane was short of water, and in 1847 Livingstone persuaded Sechele to move the whole town forty miles to the banks of the Kolobeng River, where there was water for irrigation. Livingstone built a house there, a church and a school, much of it with his own hands, and Sechele built himself a square house in European style with Livingstone's help.

Then the rains failed. Year after year, from about 1847 onwards, the country suffered drought. The Kolobeng River dwindled and then dried up. Gardens died, cattle grew thin, and hunger came. In a society where the chief was responsible for rain, the explanation seemed obvious to many of the Bakwena. Sechele had abandoned the rain rites under the influence of the missionary, and the rain had stopped. The new religion was killing them.

Livingstone recorded, in *Missionary Travels*, a long imagined conversation between a medical doctor and a rain doctor, based on the arguments he had actually heard. It is one of the fairest things he wrote. The rain doctor points out that both men use medicines, and both pray to God, and that neither can be sure what the other's medicine does. Why should the missionary condemn the rain doctor's medicine and expect his own to be trusted? The medical doctor's answers are not always convincing, and Livingstone seems to have known it. He let the rain doctor have some of the best lines. He understood that, to the Bakwena, the drought was evidence, and that he had no evidence to set against it.

Baptism

Sechele asked for baptism. Livingstone was willing, but there was a difficulty. The London Missionary Society, like almost every Protestant

mission of the time, would not baptise a man who had more than one wife. Sechele would have to send away all his wives but one.

It was a terrible demand, and Sechele understood its cost better than Livingstone did. His wives were not only his partners. They were women he had married by the law of his people, the mothers of his children, and the daughters of families on whom his authority rested. To send them away would humiliate them, impoverish them and enrage their relatives. Sechele hesitated for a long time. Livingstone held to the rule. In the end Sechele decided to do it. He kept his first wife and sent the others back to their families, with new clothing and the goods that had been theirs in his house, and with a message that he had nothing against them, but that he was following the word of God.

He was baptised on 1 October 1848. The Bakwena watched in dismay. Work in the town stopped, a great meeting was called to discuss what the chief had done, and many people stayed away from the services. Livingstone noted that some of the wives who had been sent away had been among the most regular hearers at the school and the church.

The question of polygamy has troubled missions in Africa ever since, and many African church leaders have argued that the missionaries got it wrong: that the demand to put away wives broke families, cast women and children into poverty, and made Christianity seem an enemy of African life. Others have argued that the missionaries were right about the ideal of marriage and wrong about how to reach it. This book cannot settle the question. It can say that Livingstone, who was rarely in doubt, did not seem to see how much he was asking, and that the women who paid the price were not asked at all.

The Fall

A few months later, early in 1849, it became known that one of Sechele's former wives was pregnant, and that he was the father. Sechele confessed. Livingstone suspended him from communion. He wrote in sorrow, and the episode seems to have broken something in him. He had put his whole hope for the Bakwena in this one man, and the man had failed. Livingstone never again baptised a convert that we know of. Sechele is, as far as the record shows, the only African he ever baptised.

That fact is often repeated, sometimes to make Livingstone look a failure and sometimes to make him look a heroic sower who left the reaping to others. It should be repeated carefully. Livingstone was not the only missionary at work among the Batswana, and the church at Kuruman and elsewhere was growing. He had helpers, Mebalwe and others, who taught and preached. And Sechele did not abandon his faith. He went on reading the Bible, praying and holding worship for his people. In later years he invited other missionaries to the Bakwena, and he preached himself. He remained, in his own way and on his own terms, a Christian until his death in 1892, and Christianity spread among the Bakwena largely through his example and his authority, as he had always said it would. The man Livingstone suspended became, in the long run, the evangelist of his people.

Who Is Guiding Whom?

The Ethiopian official in Acts was baptised by Philip in a pool by the roadside, and then, the story says, "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39, ASV). The missionary disappears from the story. The African

goes home with the gospel, and what he does with it there is not recorded, but the Church in Ethiopia remembers him as its first evangelist.

Livingstone, too, disappeared from Sechele's story. Within a few years he had gone north and never came back to live among the Bakwena. What Sechele did with the gospel after that, he did without Livingstone's guidance. He did it imperfectly, as all of us do. He also did it with a persistence that matched his teacher's, and he did it in his own language, among his own people, in ways no foreign missionary could have managed.

It is worth asking, at the end of this chapter, who was guiding whom. Livingstone taught Sechele to read, and Sechele read Isaiah. But Sechele also taught Livingstone, or tried to: about how a chief's faith affected a whole people, about the cost of the demands the mission made, about grief for ancestors who had died without the gospel. Livingstone did not always learn. He left Kolobeng convinced that he had failed among the Bakwena and that the way forward lay elsewhere, in the north, among peoples who had never heard a missionary. He may have been right about the north. He was wrong to think he had failed with Sechele.

Across the Thirstland

"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."
— Isaiah 35:1, ASV

The Lake Beyond the Desert

To the north of Kolobeng lay the Kalahari, the great dry country of sand and scrub that the Batswana called the thirstland. For generations, African travellers and hunters had crossed it by routes they knew, and the San and Bakgalagadi peoples lived in it, finding water where Europeans saw none. Beyond it, travellers said, there was a large lake, and beyond the lake rivers and a populous country ruled by Sebetwane, the Makololo chief who had once helped Sechele regain his throne. No European had reached it.

Livingstone wanted to go. Part of his reason was missionary: if there were large populations to the north, the gospel should go to them, and the drought and disappointment at Kolobeng made him feel that his work among the Bakwena had reached a dead end. Part of his reason was curiosity, and part was ambition. He did not separate the three, then or ever.

In June 1849 he set out with two English travellers, William Cotton Oswell and Mungo Murray, wealthy hunters who paid most of the costs of the expedition. Sechele, who wanted to send a message to Sebetwane,

provided a guide, a Bakwena man named Ramotobi who knew the route. The party crossed the desert with ox-wagons, digging for water in dry riverbeds and losing oxen to thirst. On 1 August 1849 they reached Lake Ngami.

It was a shallow lake, much smaller than the stories had made it, and the Batawana people who lived beside it had known it all their lives. But to the Royal Geographical Society in London it was a discovery, and the Society awarded Livingstone part of its annual prize for geographical exploration. It was the first public recognition of his travels. It was also the beginning of a change in how the London Missionary Society's directors, and Livingstone himself, thought about what he was doing.

The Batawana chief would not let him go on to Sebetwane, and Livingstone turned back. But he had seen something on the way that excited him more than the lake. The rivers flowing into Ngami came from the north, and they were full of water even in the dry season. The country to the north, he concluded, was not desert at all. It was well watered and full of people.

A Family on the Road

He went again in 1850, and this time he took his family: Mary, who was pregnant, and their three small children, Robert, Agnes and Thomas. Sechele went with them. Livingstone believed that a missionary should travel as a family, and that a man arriving with his wife and children would be trusted as a man of peace. He also did not want to leave them behind. They reached Lake Ngami again, but the children fell ill with fever, and there was no way north. They turned back to Kolobeng.

In August 1850, soon after their return, Mary gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. The baby lived about six weeks. Livingstone wrote of her death

with simple grief. Mary herself was left partly paralysed on one side of her face by the illness that followed the birth, and she was worn out.

Her mother, Mary Moffat, was appalled to learn that her son-in-law intended to take her daughter north again, pregnant once more, in 1851. She wrote him a letter of fierce protest, rebuking him for his recklessness with his wife and children. It was a brave letter from a mother-in-law to a son-in-law, and nothing in it was unfair. Livingstone went anyway.

Without Water

The 1851 journey, again with Oswell, took the family on a new route across the north of the Kalahari, guided by a San man called Shobo. Shobo lost the way. For four days the party had no water, and the children, Livingstone wrote, were in danger of dying of thirst before their parents' eyes. The water in the wagons ran down to almost nothing, and Livingstone feared the worst. He recorded what he felt with unusual openness. It would almost have been a relief, he wrote, to have been blamed as the cause of the catastrophe, but their mother spoke not a word of reproach, though her tearful eyes showed the agony within.

On the fifth day some of the men found water and brought it back. The children lived.

That passage about Mary is the most honest thing Livingstone wrote about his marriage in any of his books. He knew that he was to blame. He knew that his wife knew it. He was grateful that she did not say so. He did not, then or later, change course. A modern reader who is moved by her silence will also want to ask whether her silence was strength or exhaustion, and what it cost her to keep it.

Sebetwane

In June 1851 they reached the Chobe River and the country of the Makololo, and Sebetwane came to meet them. He was the most remarkable African ruler Livingstone had met. As a young man, decades earlier, he had led a band of Sotho-speaking people out of the wars that convulsed the interior of southern Africa in the 1820s, fought his way across the Kalahari, and conquered the peoples of the upper Zambezi, building a kingdom of many peoples in the river valleys. He was a warrior and a conqueror, and he was also, by Livingstone's account, generous, frank and wise, with a great curiosity about the wider world. He welcomed the missionary with delight. Livingstone wrote that he was the finest African chief he had ever met.

He was also ill. An old wound had left him with weak lungs, and soon after Livingstone's arrival he fell sick with an inflammation of the chest. Livingstone, as a doctor, was afraid to treat him, knowing that if he died under a foreign doctor's care the doctor would be blamed. He visited him and spoke to him of Christ. On 7 July 1851, two weeks after their meeting, Sebetwane died. Livingstone wrote of him with real sorrow. He had hoped that Sebetwane would open his kingdom to the gospel, and he wondered, in his journal, where the chief's soul had gone, and grieved that he had been able to say so little to him.

Sebetwane's son Sekeletu, a young man of about eighteen, succeeded him. He too welcomed Livingstone.

The Zambezi

At the beginning of August, Livingstone and Oswell rode north-east from the Chobe and came, on 4 August 1851, to a great river at Sesheke. It was the upper Zambezi, and no European had known that it flowed so far into

the centre of the continent. Livingstone stood on its bank and began to dream. If this river ran to the sea, as he believed it did, then it might be a highway into the heart of Africa, along which missionaries and traders could travel.

He saw something else there that changed his life. Among the Makololo were traders from the west coast, known as Mambari, who were buying captives from Sekeletu's people in exchange for guns and cloth, to sell to the Portuguese. The Makololo had begun to sell people from the subject peoples they ruled. It was the first time Livingstone had seen the slave trade with his own eyes, and he resolved that the way to end it was to give the people something else to sell. If honest traders could reach the Makololo with the goods they wanted, paying for ivory and other produce, the market for human beings would collapse. He needed a route to the coast.

This was the origin of the conviction he would hold for the rest of his life: that Christianity and legitimate commerce, together, could heal Africa of the slave trade. It was a sincere idea, born of what he had seen. It would also prove to be one of the most dangerous ideas of the century, when other people took it up for other ends.

The Decision

He could not take his family into the swamps and fevers of the Zambezi valley. He could not leave them at Kolobeng, where the drought continued and the Boers to the east were growing hostile. And he would not give up the north. On the way back south, in September 1851, Mary gave birth to another son, William Oswell, named after their companion, on the banks of the Zouga River.

Livingstone made his decision. He would send Mary and the four children to Britain, where they would be safe and the children could be

educated, and he would go north alone to look for a route from the Makololo country to the sea. He told the directors of the Society what he intended, and made it plain that he would find a path between the interior and the coast whatever it cost. The cost would be paid, in large part, by his wife and children.

In April 1852, at Cape Town, he put them on a ship for England. He would not see them again for four and a half years.

Blossoming Deserts

Isaiah's vision of the desert rejoicing and blossoming is a promise about the return of God's people from exile, along a highway through the wilderness: "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness" (Isaiah 35:8, ASV). Livingstone loved this kind of passage. He saw himself as a road-maker for God, opening a highway into Africa along which the gospel could travel, and he believed that the dry places would blossom when it came.

But the prophet's highway is God's, not man's. It is built for "the redeemed," who return to Zion "with singing." Livingstone was building something else as well, a road for traders and, though he did not intend it, for empires. And on the way to building it, he left his family by the side of the road. The desert had not yet blossomed for Mary Livingstone. It had nearly killed her children.

Kolobeng Plundered

"God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble."
— Psalm 46:1, ASV

The Boers

To the east of Kolobeng lay the country that would become the Transvaal. In the late 1830s and 1840s, thousands of Afrikaner farmers, the Boers, had left the British-ruled Cape Colony and moved north across the Vaal River, setting up republics of their own. They took land from the African peoples who lived there, and they required labour from them. Missionaries and some British officials accused them of taking African children as so-called apprentices, who were in practice little different from slaves. The Boers, for their part, distrusted the missionaries, and especially those of the London Missionary Society, whom they regarded as meddlers who armed Africans against them.

Livingstone detested the Boers, and said so loudly. He was right about the injustice they inflicted, though his language about them was often as sweeping as theirs about Africans. He was also not entirely innocent of their accusation. The Bakwena under Sechele had acquired guns through traders, and Livingstone had helped, believing that a people who could defend themselves would not be enslaved. He had repaired guns for Sechele and kept ammunition at Kolobeng. In 1852 the British government signed

the Sand River Convention with the Boers, recognising their independence north of the Vaal and agreeing that neither side would sell arms to the Africans in the region. The Bakwena were left to face the Boers alone.

Dimawe

In late August 1852, while Livingstone was still on his way north from the Cape, delayed at Kuruman by repairs to his wagon, a Boer commando attacked the Bakwena. The pretext was that Sechele had sheltered Mosielele, the Bakgatla chief of Mabotsa, who was wanted by the Boers. Sechele had refused to hand him over, saying, according to a well-known account, that whoever wanted Mosielele could come and take him out of his stomach. The commando attacked Sechele's people at their stronghold on the hill of Dimawe. The battle lasted several days. Livingstone reported that some sixty Bakwena were killed and that more than two hundred women and children were carried off. The Bakwena, who were well armed, killed a considerable number of the attackers, and they later counted the battle as a victory, because they had not been destroyed. But their town was burned.

The commando also went to Kolobeng. Livingstone's house was broken into and plundered. His books were torn up and their pages scattered, his medicine bottles smashed, and his furniture, clothing and stores carried off. The Boers said they found a workshop for repairing guns, which confirmed, to them, everything they suspected about him. Livingstone, when he heard the news on his way north at Kuruman, was furious. He wrote angry letters to the Cape newspapers and to the Society. He set out his losses carefully, as a Scottish workman would.

But the house mattered less than what happened to the people. Sechele had lost his town, his cattle, many of his men, and many of his people's

women and children. In 1853 he set out to go to England and appeal to Queen Victoria in person for protection. He got as far as Cape Town, where he made sworn statements about the attack, before his money ran out. The Society would not pay his passage. The colonial authorities were bound by their new treaty with the Boers, and offered no more than polite protests. Sechele went home, rebuilt his town in a new place, and over the following years made his peace with the Boers and became one of the most powerful chiefs in the region. He did not get his help from London. He got it from his own skill and the resilience of his people.

A Very Present Help

The psalm at the head of this chapter was written, it seems, in a time of war, when the city of God was threatened by enemies and the earth itself seemed to shake. "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change, And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas" (Psalm 46:1-2, ASV). The psalm does not promise that the city will not be attacked. It promises that God is present in the attack.

Livingstone was not at Kolobeng when it was plundered. Sechele and his people were at Dimawe. It was their trouble more than his, and the psalm belongs to them first. For Livingstone, the destruction of his station had a different meaning. It cut his last tie with the south. He had no home to go back to, no station, no family in Africa. The road ahead was all that remained, and he took it.

Mary in Britain

Meanwhile Mary and the four children had arrived in Britain in the summer of 1852 with almost no money and nowhere to live. She had grown up in Africa and had few friends in Britain. They went first to Livingstone's parents in Hamilton, but the arrangement did not work. Mary and her husband's family did not get on, and there were quarrels whose rights and wrongs are still disputed. Mary moved out.

For the next four years she wandered from one set of lodgings to another, in Hackney, in Manchester, in Kendal, in Epsom, living on a small allowance from the Missionary Society. A Quaker family in Kendal took her in for a time. She was often ill, often lonely, and often without enough money. She wrote to the Society for help and sometimes received it. Her letters to her husband took many months to reach him, when they reached him at all, and his to her were few, because he was in the interior with no way of sending them.

Some of her friends and relatives believed, then and later, that Mary began to drink heavily in these years, and modern biographers have taken the evidence seriously. It cannot now be proved one way or the other, and it should not be stated as a certainty. What is clear is that she was profoundly unhappy, that her health and spirits suffered, and that she felt herself abandoned. There are hints in later letters that her faith itself was shaken. She had married a missionary, expecting to share his work. She found herself a single mother in a strange country, dependent on charity, while her husband became famous for journeys that she had been sent away from.

It is important to say this clearly, because the Victorian biographies did not. Blaikie, writing with the family's help, passed over these years quickly. The children, too, paid a price. Robert, the eldest, grew up angry and unsettled, and the rest grew up without a father. Paul wrote that a man

who does not provide for his own household "hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, ASV). Livingstone did not intend to neglect his family. He sent them to safety. But he left them without the means to live in safety, and without himself, and he did it for a journey that he could have postponed. A Christian biography cannot call that courage without also calling it a failure.

Linyanti

Livingstone went north from Kuruman late in 1852, and after a slow and difficult journey he reached the Makololo town of Linyanti, on the Chobe River, in May 1853. Sekeletu received him warmly. The young chief gave him hospitality, men, oxen and gifts, and over the following months the two men became friends of a sort.

Livingstone wanted to find a healthy site for a mission among the Makololo, somewhere high and free of the fever that killed Europeans in the river valleys. He travelled up the Zambezi into the Barotse valley looking for one, and found none. Everywhere was low, wet and malarial. He himself suffered repeated attacks of fever. Many of the Makololo, too, suffered from it, because they had come from the dry south. The idea of a mission among them, which he had promised the Society, began to look impossible.

He preached regularly to the Makololo, and they listened politely, but there was no response like Sechele's. Sekeletu was frank about why. Livingstone recorded that the young chief did not wish to learn to read the Bible, because he was afraid that it might change his heart and make him content with only one wife, like Sechele. The story of the Bakwena had travelled north. The price of baptism was known, and Sekeletu was not willing to pay it.

No Value on Anything

In these years Livingstone wrote in his journal one of the resolutions for which he is best remembered. Blaikie printed it, and it has been quoted ever since, with small variations. He resolved to place no value on anything he had or might possess except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. He went on to say that anything that would advance that kingdom should be given away or kept, only as giving or keeping it would best promote the glory of God, to whom he owed all his hopes in time and eternity.

It is a noble resolution, and he lived much of it. He spent little on himself, gave away his possessions freely, and cared nothing for comfort. The question this chapter raises is whether his wife and children counted, in his mind, among the things he possessed, to be given away for the kingdom. He would have been horrified at the suggestion. But it is hard to read his letters from these years without feeling that, in practice, they did. He had laid them on the altar along with his books and his furniture. Jesus said that whoever left house, or wife, or children "for the kingdom of God's sake" would receive many times more (Luke 18:29-30, ASV). He did not say that the wife and children would be asked whether they agreed.

Livingstone was now alone, at the edge of the known world, with a chief who had given him men and a problem he could not solve. If there was no healthy place for a mission in the Makololo country, then perhaps the answer was a road: a route to the coast along which missionaries and traders could come and go, staying only in the healthy season. He decided to find one. In November 1853 he set out for the Atlantic.

Twenty-Seven Men

"In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honoreth them that fear Jehovah; He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not."
— Psalm 15:4, ASV

The Company

On 11 November 1853, Livingstone left Linyanti for the west coast with twenty-seven men. They were not his servants. They were Sekeletu's men, chosen by the chief from among the many peoples of his kingdom, and they went because their chief had sent them and because they hoped to open a trade route to the sea for him. Some were Makololo, but most were from the subject peoples of the upper Zambezi. Their leader was a man named Pitsane, and Livingstone came to rely on him heavily. The journey that followed is often described as Livingstone's journey. It was theirs as much as his. Without them he would not have gone a hundred miles.

The equipment was very small. Livingstone took a few spare clothes, some tea, coffee and sugar, a small tent, a gun and some ammunition, a supply of beads to pay for food and passage, a sextant, a chronometer watch, a thermometer and compasses, a Bible, a nautical almanac and a book of mathematical tables for his calculations, and a magic lantern, a projector with painted glass slides of Bible scenes, which he used to show and explain the gospel stories in the villages. He had very little to trade and

almost nothing to give. He was depending, as he would on all his great journeys, on the goodwill of the people through whose land he passed.

Up the River

They went north by canoe up the Zambezi, through the Barotse valley, and then struck north-west overland into the country of the Lunda peoples, towards the watershed where the rivers begin to flow west to the Atlantic. The rains had begun. The country was flooded, the paths were deep in water, and the party was soaked day and night. Livingstone had attack after attack of fever. He grew so weak that he could hardly sit on his riding ox.

The Lunda chiefs received them in various ways. The most memorable was a young woman chief named Manenko, a niece of the great chief Shinte, who insisted on escorting the party to her uncle's town herself, overruled Livingstone's own plans, and marched at the head of the column through pouring rain at a pace the men could hardly match, unbothered by the cold they complained of. Livingstone was both exasperated and impressed, and his account of her is one of the liveliest passages in his book. She was not a figure in his story. He was, for those few days, a figure in hers.

Shinte himself received them with great ceremony and real kindness. At his town Livingstone showed his lantern pictures. When the slide of Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac was shown, he recorded, the women watching thought the knife was about to come out of the picture at them, and fled. He laughed at the story, and so did they afterwards. It is worth noticing which Bible story he chose to show first: a father, called by God, about to give up his son.

The Chiboque

Further west, the country changed. Here the people had been in contact with the slave traders of the coast for generations, and they had learned to demand payment from every traveller who passed. The Chiboque, a people near the Kasai River, surrounded Livingstone's party and demanded a man, an ox, a gun or a tusk as the price of passage, saying that the party had insulted them. They did not want beads. Livingstone understood that a man meant one of his companions, to be sold as a slave.

He sat on his camp stool with his gun across his knees, facing the Chiboque headman, while his men drew close around him and the Chiboque warriors pressed in with spears and guns. He refused to give up a man. He offered a shirt, then beads, then other things. The tension rose, and for a time it seemed that there would be bloodshed. In the end he gave an ox, and they let him go. He was proud afterwards that no blood had been shed. His men had been ready to fight, and he had held them back.

On another occasion, his own men nearly mutinied. Tired, hungry and frightened, some of them refused to go on and became insolent. Livingstone, by his own account, rushed out of his tent with a pistol and threatened to shoot the ringleader. The mutiny collapsed. He believed that discipline had to be kept or the whole party would be lost, and he was probably right. It is also a reminder that he was a leader who could frighten as well as inspire.

The Edge of the World

At the Kwango River, the eastern border of Portuguese influence, a hostile chief demanded more tribute than they could pay. A Portuguese militia sergeant named Cypriano di Abreu, the son of a Portuguese father and an

African mother, came to their help, took them across the river, and fed them generously at his home. Livingstone was moved by his kindness. From there the way to the coast lay through territory controlled by the Portuguese, with forts and traders, and on 31 May 1854 the party walked into Luanda, the capital of the Portuguese colony of Angola. Livingstone was so ill that he could barely stand.

The men from the Zambezi had never seen the sea. Livingstone recorded what they said when they first looked at it, and it is one of the most quoted passages in his book. They had marched along with their father, they said, believing what the old people had always told them, that the world had no end; but all at once the world had said to them that it was finished, and there was no more of it. They called Livingstone father, and they had followed him to the end of the world.

Mr Gabriel

At Luanda there was one Englishman, Edmund Gabriel, the British commissioner for the suppression of the slave trade. Gabriel took Livingstone into his house, put him to bed, and nursed him through months of fever and dysentery. Livingstone wrote of the pleasure of lying in a real English bed after six months of sleeping on the ground. When he recovered, he took his men to see the city, the ships in the harbour and the churches. The officers of a British naval squadron showed them over a warship. To earn money, the men found work unloading coal from ships in the port, and they bought cloth and beads to take home.

Luanda itself was a reminder of why Livingstone had come. For more than two centuries it had been one of the greatest slave ports in the world. Hundreds of thousands of people from the interior of Angola and beyond had been marched to its harbour and shipped across the Atlantic, most of

them to Brazil. Brazil had stopped importing enslaved Africans only in 1850, under heavy British pressure, and the British squadron whose officers entertained Livingstone was there to stop the trade from reviving. Inland, slavery and forced labour continued, and the traders whose demands had troubled the party at the Kasai were part of the same system. Livingstone looked at the cathedral and the fine houses of the old city and knew what had paid for them.

The naval officers offered Livingstone a passage home to England. His family was there, and he had not seen them for more than two years. He was ill and exhausted, and he had done what he had set out to do: he had reached the coast. He could have sailed, and sent the men home by another route with the help of the Portuguese. No one would have blamed him.

He refused. He had promised Sekeletu that he would bring the men back, and he would not break his word. They did not know the way home, and the country they had come through was dangerous, full of slave traders who would have been glad to seize a party of unprotected men. Livingstone believed that if he left them, they would never see the Zambezi again.

It was a costly decision, and it may well have saved their lives. It also, as it turned out, saved his own. The ship on which he would have sailed, HMS *Forerunner*, sank off Madeira on her voyage home. Livingstone had sent his journal, maps and letters on her. They went to the bottom, and he had to write them all again.

He That Sweareth to His Own Hurt

Psalm 15 asks who may dwell on God's holy hill, and answers with a portrait of an honest man: one who walks uprightly, speaks truth in his heart, does not slander his neighbour, and "sweareth to his own hurt, and

changeth not." That is, he keeps his promises even when keeping them costs him.

Livingstone kept his promise to the twenty-seven men. It cost him another two years in Africa, months of fever and danger, and the pain of continued separation from his family. He did it because he had given his word to a chief and to the men themselves, and because the old Highland precept of his family, "Be honest," meant more to him than his own comfort. It is one of the finest things he ever did, and it is worth setting beside the harder judgements this book has to make. The man who could leave his wife to wander through English lodging-houses would not leave twenty-seven African men on a strange coast.

There is something uncomfortable in that comparison, and it should not be smoothed away. But neither should the decision at Luanda be belittled. It was the act of a man who saw his African companions as people to whom he owed a debt of honour, at a time when many Europeans would have seen them as hired hands to be paid off and left. The men knew it. On the long road home they would show him the same loyalty.

On 20 September 1854, Livingstone and the twenty-seven left Luanda and turned back east, into the interior.

The Word of a Gentleman

"And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations ... and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."
— Matthew 28:18-20, ASV

The Long Way Back

The journey back from Luanda took a year. Livingstone was ill for much of it, with fever and a bout of rheumatic fever that left him unable to travel for weeks. He went slowly, rewriting the journal that had gone down with the *Forerunner* and taking observations to correct his maps. The men carried the goods they had earned at Luanda, and the gifts that the Portuguese and British had sent for Sekeletu, including a colonel's uniform and a horse. In September 1855 the party walked back into Linyanti.

The men were heroes. They had been to the sea and come back, and for days they told the people of Linyanti what they had seen: the ocean, the ships, the city with its stone houses, the warship with its guns. Livingstone recorded that they boasted that they had gone to the end of the world and had turned back only when there was no more land. Sekeletu was delighted with his gifts and with the reports. The faithfulness of the twenty-seven had made Livingstone a trusted man among the Makololo.

But Livingstone had concluded that the western route would not do. It was too long, too difficult, too unhealthy, and it passed through country where the slave trade was entrenched. He would try the other way, eastward down the Zambezi to the Indian Ocean. If the river was navigable, it might be the highway he was looking for.

Mosi-oa-Tunya

In early November 1855 he set out again, with a much larger party provided by Sekeletu, more than a hundred men this time, and with a guide and interpreter named Sekwebu, a man who had lived in the country to the east and knew its languages. Sekeletu himself came with them for the first part of the way.

For years Livingstone had heard of a great waterfall on the Zambezi, below the Makololo country, which the people called Mosi-oa-Tunya, "the smoke that thunders," because of the columns of spray that rose from it and could be seen for miles. In the middle of November 1855, Sekeletu's men took him by canoe down the river to an island on the very lip of the falls, and he lay down and looked over the edge into the chasm where the whole width of the Zambezi plunges into a narrow gorge.

He described it in *Missionary Travels* with a rare lyricism. No one could imagine the beauty of the view from anything seen in England, he wrote, and it had never been seen before by European eyes, but scenes so lovely, he thought, must have been gazed on by angels in their flight. He named the falls after Queen Victoria, the only English name, he said, that he gave to anything in the country. He planted peach and apricot stones on the island, and he cut his initials and the date on a tree there, which he said was the only time he had indulged in that kind of vanity.

The renaming of the falls is often taken as a symbol of his whole life, and rightly. The falls had a name already. The people who lived near them had known them for centuries, had worshipped at them, and had brought him there. Livingstone saw, and was moved, and gave them the name of a distant queen, as though they had not been seen until he saw them. He meant it as an honour to the falls, not an insult to the people. But it was the beginning of a habit of mind, his and his country's, in which what Africans knew did not count until a European had recorded it. Zambia, since independence, has used the old name alongside the new, and the national park around the falls is called Mosi-oa-Tunya.

The Healthy Highlands

Below the falls, the party left the river and crossed the high plateau to the north of the Zambezi, the country of the Batoka people. It was cooler and drier than the river valleys, and Livingstone thought that it was healthy, free from the fever that killed Europeans lower down. Here, he believed, was the place for missions and for European settlement: a high, fertile, well-watered country, with a large population, reached by a great river from the sea. The vision that would drive him for the next eight years was born on this plateau.

The party descended again to the Zambezi and followed it east, through country that grew more hostile as they approached the territory of the Portuguese and their slave-trading allies. Some of the chiefs along the river had been raided by slavers, and they suspected that any large armed party was another raid.

14 January 1856

On 14 January 1856 the party reached the point where the Luangwa River joins the Zambezi, near the ruins of the old Portuguese settlement of Zumbo. The people of the chief on the other side had gathered in large numbers, armed, and Livingstone's men believed that they would be attacked when they tried to cross. That night he wrote in his journal one of the most famous passages he ever wrote. Blaikie printed it from the manuscript.

He confessed to great turmoil of spirit at the prospect that all his plans for the welfare of that great region and its people might be brought to nothing the next day by the men across the river, whom he described with the contemptuous word his age used for peoples it thought uncivilised. Then he went on. He read, he wrote, that Jesus had come and said that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth, and had told his disciples to go and teach all nations, promising to be with them always, even to the end of the world. That, Livingstone wrote, was the word of a gentleman of the most sacred and strict honour, and it settled the matter. He would not cross secretly by night, as he had intended. Should such a man as he flee? No; he would take observations for latitude and longitude that night, though they might be his last. And he added that he felt quite calm now, and thanked God.

The word he used is not one this book would use, and it described people who, as it turned out, were not hostile at all, only cautious. The entry is recounted here because it is one of the keys to Livingstone's faith, and because it is honest to show that his faith and his prejudice could sit in the same sentence. The people across the river had good reason to fear a large armed party coming down the Zambezi. Livingstone had good reason

to fear them. Both sides were frightened, and both sides, the next day, behaved with more restraint than they feared the other would.

A Promise Taken at Its Word

What is remarkable in the entry is the way Livingstone came to rest. He was not reassured by any change in the situation. Nothing had changed. He was reassured by a promise. Jesus had said, "lo, I am with you always," and Livingstone took the words as the word of a gentleman, a man of honour who would not break his promise. In his own phrase, borrowed from an old saying, that was the end of it: there was nothing more to be said.

It is a very Scottish way of trusting God, and a very Victorian one. It treats the promise of Christ as a kind of contract, binding on the one who made it, and it finds peace in the fact that Christ keeps his word. Some readers may find the language too stiff. But it captures something true. The promise at the end of Matthew's Gospel is not a feeling. It is a word spoken by the one to whom "all authority" has been given, and it holds whether or not we feel it. Livingstone did not feel calm and then believe. He believed, and then he felt calm.

The next morning he crossed. The armed men watched, and did not attack. Livingstone took his men over in a single canoe, a few at a time, staying on the bank himself until the last of them had gone across, and showing the watching people his watch and his magnifying glass to keep them interested. Then he crossed himself, thanked them, and went on. He did not forget the verse. He would come back to it, in other words and other dangers, for the rest of his life.

Tete and the Sea

Below Zumbo the danger increased again. A chief named Mpende threatened to attack, and was won over only after tense negotiation, helped by Sekwebu's skill as an interpreter and by Livingstone's insistence that his party came in peace and were not Portuguese. On 2 March 1856, exhausted, Livingstone reached Tete, the Portuguese town on the lower Zambezi. The Portuguese commandant received him kindly.

Between Zumbo and Tete, however, he had made a decision that would have consequences he could not foresee. To save time and avoid hostile country, he had left the river for a stretch and travelled overland, south of it. In doing so he missed a long section of the Zambezi above Tete, where the river runs through a narrow gorge called Kebrabasa. He had been told that there were rapids there, but he did not see them. He assumed that they could be passed by a steamer at high water. He would discover, two years later, how wrong he was.

He left most of the Makololo men at Tete, more than a hundred of them, with land to cultivate and the promise of the Portuguese commandant to look after them. He promised them that he would come back and take them home. Then he went down the river to Quelimane, on the coast, which he reached on 20 May 1856. He had crossed Africa from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, the first European known to have done so, though Portuguese-African traders had made the crossing before him.

Sekwebu

A British warship took him from Quelimane to Mauritius. Sekwebu, the guide and interpreter who had brought the party safely down the Zambezi, went with him, meaning to go on to England. He had never been to sea.

On the voyage, and at Mauritius, the strangeness of everything overwhelmed him. Livingstone wrote that Sekwebu became insane, and in a fit of terror jumped overboard and was drowned. His body was never found.

Livingstone grieved for him. He had depended on Sekwebu as he had on Pitsane and the others, and he had brought him out of his world into one that destroyed him. Sekwebu is a small figure in the books, given a few lines. He deserves to be remembered as one of those whose skill and courage made the crossing of Africa possible, and as the first of many Africans who paid with their lives for their association with Livingstone's journeys.

Livingstone sailed on from Mauritius, through the Red Sea and Egypt, and reached England on 9 December 1856. He had been away from Britain for sixteen years. He was forty-three years old, and he was about to become the most famous man in the country.

"I Never Made a Sacrifice"

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward."
— Romans 8:18, ASV

Home

Livingstone landed in England in December 1856 and was reunited with Mary after four and a half years. She had written a poem of welcome for him, which survives, full of love and of the pain of waiting. The children hardly knew him. Robert was ten, Agnes nine, Thomas seven, and William Oswell, whom he had last seen as a baby, was five. His father had died that February, and when Livingstone went to Hamilton to see his mother and sisters, it was to a house in mourning.

He was famous at once. Reports of his crossing of Africa had been reaching Britain for two years, and the public had followed them with excitement. Within days of his arrival he was received at a special meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, which had already awarded him its gold medal, and at a meeting of the London Missionary Society. Over the following months he was given an honorary degree by Oxford and honours by other universities, the freedom of several cities, and an audience with Queen Victoria. He was invited to speak everywhere, and crowds came to see him. He disliked the attention and was a poor speaker, reading his

addresses awkwardly in his strong Scottish accent. It made no difference. People wanted to see the man who had walked across Africa.

Missionary Travels

The publisher John Murray persuaded him to write a book, and he spent most of 1857 writing it, in rented rooms in London, with Mary and the children around him. *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* appeared in November 1857. It was a long, dense book, full of natural history and geography as well as adventure, and it sold some seventy thousand copies, an extraordinary number for the time. For the first time in his life, Livingstone had money. He used much of it to provide for his family and to pay for his next journey.

The book made his reputation, and it also made his message. Its pages argued that the interior of Africa was not a desert but a rich, populous, well-watered country, healthy on its high plateaus, full of people who wanted to trade and were willing to hear the gospel. The great obstacle, he argued, was the slave trade, which set people against each other and made all travel dangerous. The answer was to open the country to legitimate commerce by way of the great rivers, especially the Zambezi, so that Africans could sell cotton, ivory and other produce instead of people. Missionaries would follow the traders, and Christianity and civilisation would spread together.

Leaving the Society

Not everyone was delighted. The directors of the London Missionary Society had watched his travels with growing unease. They were a missionary society, supported by the gifts of churchgoers for the preaching

of the gospel, and their missionary had spent years exploring rather than preaching. In a letter that reached Livingstone on his way home, the Society's secretary had written that the directors were restricted in their power to support plans only remotely connected with the spreading of the gospel. Livingstone was deeply offended. He believed that everything he had done was connected with the spread of the gospel, because it was opening a way for it.

The Society was willing, in fact, to support a mission to the Makololo, which he had promised, and it went ahead with one. But Livingstone was ready to move on. The government, impressed by his journeys and attracted by the idea of opening the Zambezi to British trade, offered him an appointment as consul at Quelimane, with responsibility for the east coast and the independent districts of the interior, and the leadership of an official expedition up the Zambezi. He accepted, and in 1857 he resigned from the London Missionary Society.

He insisted that he had not stopped being a missionary. He wrote to friends that he was serving Christ as much in exploring as in preaching, and that a man could be a missionary in many ways. There was truth in that. There was also a change of direction that he did not fully admit, even to himself. From now on he would be paid by the British government, accountable to the Foreign Office, and committed to an expedition whose goals were commercial and scientific as well as Christian. He would never again work for a missionary society.

The Senate House

On 4 December 1857, Livingstone spoke in the Senate House at Cambridge, to a packed audience of students and dons. It was the most important speech of his life, and it was printed soon afterwards. He spoke

about Africa, its people, its resources, and its need, and about the slave trade. Then he turned to the subject of sacrifice.

"For my own part," he said, "I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay?" He went on: "It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in, and for, us. I never made a sacrifice."

And he ended with an appeal. He asked his hearers to turn their attention to Africa. He expected, he said, to be cut off in that country within a few years, and he begged them not to let it be shut again now that it was open. "I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity," he said, and he asked them to carry on the work he had begun, and left it with them.

A Privilege

The Cambridge speech had an immediate effect. Students and graduates of Cambridge and Oxford, with support from Durham and Dublin, founded the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, which would send its first party to the Zambezi in 1861. It was the most direct fruit of Livingstone's appeal, and in time it became one of the great Anglican missions of East and Central Africa, with a long history of African clergy and churches. Its beginnings, as a later chapter will show, were tragic.

The words about sacrifice have been quoted in thousands of sermons. They deserve to be, because they express something true about the Christian life. Paul wrote, in the verse at the head of this chapter, that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory to come, and Livingstone was echoing him almost word for word. To serve Christ at a cost is not a loss, when it is set against what Christ has given and what he will give. The missionary who thinks of himself as a martyr has misunderstood the gospel. Livingstone had not.

And yet the words need to be heard alongside the story of the previous four years. Livingstone had not made a sacrifice, he said. Mary had. Her years in English lodgings, alone with four children, were a sacrifice, and she had not chosen them. The children's years without a father were a sacrifice. Sekwebu, drowned off Mauritius, had made one. The speech was true of Livingstone's own heart, and it was spoken with real humility. It was not the whole truth about the cost of his calling, because much of that cost had been paid by others.

Commerce and Christianity

The last sentences of the speech have been quoted almost as often as the passage on sacrifice, and they have been criticised more. "I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity." In later years Livingstone's phrase was turned into a slogan, "Christianity, commerce and civilisation," and used by many who had no interest in Christianity at all to justify the European takeover of Africa. Traders, settlers and governments followed the paths he opened, and they did not always come in the spirit he hoped.

It is fair to ask what Livingstone himself meant. He did not mean conquest. He believed that Africans should own their own land and govern

themselves, and he was a fierce critic of the Boers and later of the Portuguese for taking African land and labour. What he wanted was trade: British merchants buying cotton and ivory from African producers, paying fair prices, and so giving African communities an alternative to selling people. He believed that this would make the slave trade unprofitable and would bring Africans into contact with Christian civilisation, which he assumed would be good for them.

There was real compassion in this, and real naivety. Livingstone believed that British commerce was, at heart, a Christian thing, honest and beneficial, and he underestimated how easily trade becomes exploitation when one side has guns and ships and the other does not. He also assumed, as most Victorians did, that what he called civilisation, meaning British customs and institutions, was the natural companion of the gospel. The history of the next century would show how dangerous that assumption was. Jesus warned, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24, ASV). Livingstone did not think he was serving mammon. He thought he was harnessing it. It is not a thing that can easily be done.

In March 1858 he sailed from Liverpool for the Zambezi, at the head of a government expedition, with a paddle steamer in pieces in the hold and Mary and their youngest son beside him. He was forty-five, the most famous missionary in the world, and no longer a missionary of any society. He was going back, as he had promised, to make an open path.

Kebrabasa

"A man's heart deviseth his way; But Jehovah directeth his steps."
— Proverbs 16:9, ASV

The Expedition

The Zambezi Expedition sailed from Liverpool on 10 March 1858 in the steamer *Pearl*. In its hold, in three sections, was a small paddle steamer for use on the river, named *Ma-Robert*, after the name by which Mary Livingstone was known among the Batswana, "mother of Robert." The expedition had a government grant, a set of official instructions, and a staff of six Europeans besides Livingstone himself: his brother Charles, who had come back from America to serve as general assistant; John Kirk, a young Edinburgh doctor and botanist; Richard Thornton, a geologist of twenty; Thomas Baines, an artist and storekeeper who had experience of southern Africa; Norman Bedingfeld, a naval officer, to command the vessels; and George Rae, a ship's engineer from Blantyre.

Its aims, set out in the Foreign Office instructions, were to explore the Zambezi and its resources, to open it to British trade, to encourage the people to grow cotton and other crops for export, and to discourage the slave trade. Livingstone also intended to take the Makololo men home from Tete, as he had promised, and to prepare the way for missions on the healthy highlands he had seen.

Mary and their youngest son, Oswell, sailed with them. But on the voyage it became clear that she was pregnant again, and at Cape Town it was decided that she could not go on to the fever-ridden Zambezi delta. She went north to her parents at Kuruman, and there, on 16 November 1858, she gave birth to a daughter, Anna Mary. Livingstone would not see the child until she was five. The other children were in Britain. Mary, once more, was separated from them and from him.

A Leaking Launch

The expedition went wrong almost from the start. The *Ma-Robert* had been built cheaply, of a new kind of steel plate, and it was badly designed for the river. It burned enormous quantities of wood, so that the crew spent much of each day cutting fuel, and it was so underpowered that canoes paddled past it. Its plates soon began to corrode and leak. The crew nicknamed it the Asthmatic. Livingstone blamed the builder, and with reason.

He also quarrelled almost at once with Bedingfeld, the naval officer, over who commanded the vessels. Bedingfeld resigned and went home within a few months. Livingstone had never commanded Europeans before, apart from his short partnership with Rogers Edwards, and he did not do it well. He gave few clear instructions, expected his men to work as hard as he did without being told, and took any disagreement as disloyalty. He relied heavily on his brother Charles, who was unpopular with the others and whose reports of their failings Livingstone tended to believe.

The delta of the Zambezi was a maze of channels, and it took weeks to find a navigable one. Everyone suffered from malaria. Livingstone had worked out a treatment for fever, a combination of quinine with purgatives, which he called his rousers, and it saved many lives, including

his own. It was one of his real contributions to tropical medicine. But it could not keep a party of Europeans healthy in the delta in the rainy season.

The Makololo at Tete

In September 1858 the expedition reached Tete, and Livingstone met the Makololo men he had left there two and a half years before. They were overjoyed to see him. Some of them had died while he was away, and some had settled, married and made new lives at Tete. The rest wanted to go home, and he renewed his promise to take them. It was a promise he kept, in 1860, though by then many more had chosen to stay. The Makololo at Tete were the one part of the expedition's first year that went as he had hoped.

Kebrabasa

Above Tete lay the gorge of Kebrabasa, the stretch of the Zambezi he had bypassed on his way down in 1856. He had assumed that the rapids there could be passed by a steamer. In November 1858 he went to see them, first in the *Ma-Robert*, which could not get far, and then on foot, scrambling over the hot black rocks of the gorge with Kirk and a few of the Makololo.

What they found was a narrow channel through which the whole river forced its way between cliffs, in a series of rapids and falls, the worst of them a cataract called Morumbwa. No steamer could pass it. Kirk saw this at once. Livingstone would not accept it. He wrote to the government that a more powerful steamer, at the height of the flood, might pass the rapids, and he asked for a new vessel. Kirk, in his private journal, began to record doubts about his leader's judgement that would grow sharper as the years went on.

It was the moment when the great plan collapsed. Livingstone had told the British public and government that the Zambezi was a highway into the interior, leading to healthy highlands where missionaries and traders could settle. The highway was blocked, a few hundred miles from the sea, by an obstacle he had not seen because he had walked round it. His whole reputation, and the government's money, rested on a mistake.

The Heart Deviseth

The proverb at the head of this chapter is one of the wisest in the Bible about planning. "A man's heart deviseth his way; But Jehovah directeth his steps." It does not say that planning is wrong. It says that our plans are not the last word. God directs the steps, and sometimes he directs them where we did not intend to go.

Livingstone was a great deviser of ways. His plan for the Zambezi was bold, generous and, in its way, visionary. It was also built on a hasty assumption, and when the assumption proved false he could not let it go. That is the shadow side of the perseverance that this book has praised. The same stubbornness that carried him across Africa made it almost impossible for him to admit that he had been wrong. He did not abandon his plan; he looked for a way round it. Sometimes that is faith. Sometimes it is only pride.

And yet the proverb also suggests something more hopeful. Livingstone's steps were directed, in the end, somewhere he had not planned to go. Unable to go up the Zambezi, he turned north, up its tributary the Shire River. What he found there would shape the history of a whole country.

The Shire

In January 1859 the expedition steamed up the Shire, a river no European had explored, into a valley of rich farmland and large villages. The Mang'anja people who lived there were at first suspicious, gathering on the banks with bows and poisoned arrows, but they were won over by patient explanation that the strangers came in peace and were not slave traders. Some way upstream, the river was blocked by a series of cataracts, which Livingstone named the Murchison Cataracts after his friend Sir Roderick Murchison of the Royal Geographical Society.

Above the cataracts was high country. In April 1859, Livingstone and Kirk walked up into the highlands and reached Lake Shirwa, a large lake that had not been recorded by Europeans. They saw a cool, fertile plateau with many people, the place, Livingstone thought, for the healthy missionary settlement he had imagined on the Batoka plateau. And they heard of a much larger lake farther north.

In September 1859 they reached it. Lake Nyasa, now Lake Malawi, is one of the great lakes of Africa, some three hundred and sixty miles long. Livingstone and his party were the first Europeans to report it to the world, though Portuguese and Arab-Swahili traders knew of it, and a Portuguese traveller may have reached it earlier. It was a real discovery in the sense that mattered to the British public, and Livingstone presented it as a triumph. It was the most important achievement of the expedition.

It came with a terrible discovery. Along the shores of the lake and in the highlands around it ran one of the main routes of the East African slave trade. Caravans from the lake carried captives east to the coast, to be shipped to Zanzibar and the markets of Arabia and the Persian Gulf. The people of the Shire Highlands lived in fear of raiders, both slave traders from the coast and Yao groups who were themselves moving into the

region. Livingstone had found the healthy highlands. He had also found the open sore.

Dismissals

Within the expedition, relations went from bad to worse. In 1859 Livingstone dismissed Richard Thornton, the young geologist, for what he considered idleness. He also dismissed Thomas Baines, the artist, after Charles accused him of stealing expedition stores and giving them away. Baines denied it to the end of his life, and later historians have generally believed him and blamed Charles. Livingstone gave him no real hearing. He sent Baines home in disgrace and refused to retract the charge.

Thornton later rejoined the expedition on his own account and died of fever in Africa in 1863. Baines went on to a long career as an artist and explorer in southern Africa, and his paintings of the Zambezi and the Victoria Falls are among the finest records of the region. Neither man ever received an apology.

It is painful to set these episodes beside the Livingstone of Luanda, who would not abandon twenty-seven African men. The same man who kept his word to Africans at great cost to himself could be unjust and unforgiving to the Europeans who served under him. Part of the reason may be that he expected nothing of Africans that he did not expect of himself, while he expected of his European colleagues everything that he expected of himself, and was angry when they fell short. Part of it was simply that he was not a good leader of men who were not willing to follow him without question. He knew how to persevere. He did not know how to share command.

Graves at Linyanti

"whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."
— James 4:14, ASV

A Promise Kept

In May 1860, Livingstone set out from Tete to take the Makololo home. He had promised Sekeletu, when he set out for the east in 1855, that he would bring them back, and he had promised the men themselves. It was a journey of some six hundred miles upriver, on foot, and it delayed the expedition's other work by most of a year. Kirk and Charles went with him. Many of the men no longer wanted to go. They had lived at Tete for four years. Some had married local women and had children, some had found work, and some had simply come to prefer the life there. Livingstone did not force them. The party that set out was smaller than the one that had come down, and more men slipped away on the road.

It was characteristic of him that he went at all. The expedition's instructions did not require it, and the Foreign Office would hardly have noticed if he had sent the men home under an escort. But he had given his word, and he would not delegate it. On the way he passed the Victoria Falls

again, and this time he and Charles measured them, dropping a weighted line into the chasm and making careful notes.

The men who stayed behind made their own choices, and some of them made a mark on history that Livingstone could not have foreseen. A group of the Makololo who had served the expedition later settled in the lower Shire valley, in what is now southern Malawi. Armed with the guns the expedition left them and respected for their connection with the Europeans, they gathered followers among the local people and the refugees from the slave raids, and two of them, Ramakukane and Kasisi, became chiefs whose descendants ruled there for generations. They were not Livingstone's converts or his servants. They were men from the upper Zambezi who saw an opportunity in a disordered land and took it, sometimes protecting the people around them and sometimes ruling them harshly. They belong in this story as reminders that the Africans who travelled with Livingstone were not extras in his drama. They had their own lives, and they lived them.

What He Found

When they reached Sesheke, on the upper Zambezi, in August 1860, Livingstone found the Makololo kingdom in decline. Sekeletu was ill with a disfiguring skin disease, which his people believed had been caused by witchcraft, and he had shut himself away from his subjects. He was suspicious and harsh, and many of his people were afraid of him. The young chief who had befriended Livingstone in 1853 had become, in a few years, a sick and bitter man. Livingstone treated him, with some success, but he could see that the Makololo state, which Sebetwane had built by conquest, was beginning to fall apart. Within a short time of Sekeletu's

death a few years later, the subject peoples rose against the Makololo and destroyed their rule.

He also found out what had happened to the missionaries.

The Makololo Mission

In 1857, after Livingstone's return to Britain, the London Missionary Society had decided to send missions to two of the peoples he had described: the Matabele in the south, and the Makololo on the Zambezi. Livingstone had urged both. For the Makololo mission the Society chose Holloway Helmore, an experienced missionary who had served for many years among the Batswana, and Roger Price, a young man newly arrived from Britain. They travelled north across the Kalahari with their wives and children, by ox-wagon, a journey of many months, and arrived at Linyanti in February 1860.

Linyanti was low, marshy and full of fever, and they arrived in the rainy season. Within weeks the party was dying. On 7 March, Helmore's three-year-old son Henry died. Price's baby daughter died soon after, and so did another of the Helmore children. On 12 March, Anne Helmore died. Holloway Helmore himself died on 21 April. Several of the African wagon drivers and servants who had come with them also died. Price, ill himself, with his wife and the two surviving Helmore children, was allowed by the Makololo to leave, but stripped of many of his goods. On the journey south, Isabella Price died too. Price and the two children were eventually found and brought to safety by another missionary, John Mackenzie.

Of the nine Europeans who had set out for Linyanti, six were dead: Holloway and Anne Helmore, two of their four children, and Roger Price's wife and baby daughter. The mission was over. It had lasted a few months.

Who Was to Blame?

The disaster caused bitter recriminations, and some of them fell on Livingstone. Roger Price believed that the Makololo had poisoned the party, and some of the Batswana long held the same belief. Livingstone was sure that they had died of malaria, and modern opinion largely agrees with him. But others asked why the missionaries had gone to Linyanti at all, and why they had gone in the wet season, and why Livingstone, who had urged the mission and knew the country, had not been there to meet them, as many believed he had promised.

Livingstone denied that he had made any firm promise to meet them, and pointed out that the expedition had delayed him. He blamed the missionaries for going to the low country rather than looking for the higher ground he had recommended, and for not treating the fever in the way he had found effective. Some of what he said was fair. He had told the Society that the Makololo wanted to move to a healthier place, and that the mission should go with them. He had not told the missionaries to wait at Linyanti in the rainy season.

But it was also true that his own books had painted the country in brighter colours than it deserved, that his own enthusiasm had driven the mission, and that his promise to come to the Makololo, whatever its exact terms, had been part of the reason the Society chose that field. He did not, in his letters, show much sense of his own share in the tragedy. He defended himself, as he usually did, by explaining why others had been wrong. It is a pattern this book has seen before and will see again. Livingstone could bear almost any suffering of his own. He found it very hard to bear the thought that he had caused suffering to others.

A Vapour

The verse at the head of this chapter is from James's warning to merchants who plan their year: today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and spend a year there, and trade, and make a profit. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." James goes on: "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that" (James 4:15, ASV).

The Helmores and the Prices went to Linyanti because they believed God had called them there. They planned carefully and travelled far. They did not know what would happen on the morrow. Their lives were indeed a vapour, and it vanished in a few weeks. Christians have always found such deaths hard to understand, and it is right that they should. There is no tidy explanation, and James does not offer one. He offers only humility: the reminder that our plans, however good, are held in God's hand and not our own.

It is also worth remembering the dead whose names were not recorded. The African wagon drivers and servants who came north with the Helmores and the Prices, men from the mission stations of the south, died at Linyanti too, and the histories of the mission rarely name them. They had their own families and their own reasons for making the journey, and they paid the same price. The church has sometimes kept a list of its missionary martyrs that included only the Europeans. God keeps a fuller one.

That humility was what Livingstone most lacked in these years. He planned for continents. He spoke of the Zambezi, the Shire Highlands and the healthy plateaus as though he could see what would happen on them for a generation to come. He was right about some of it, and the missions

that eventually took root in the Shire Highlands bore out part of his vision. But the graves at Linyanti were a warning that Africa did not bend to anyone's plans, and that the cost of being wrong was paid in the lives of others. Livingstone does not seem to have heard the warning. The worst cost of his plans was still to come.

The Way Back

He left Sekeletu's country in September 1860 and went back down the Zambezi to Tete. In the Kebrabasa gorge, where he insisted on taking canoes through the rapids, Kirk's canoe overturned and Kirk lost his notes and much of his equipment, narrowly escaping with his life. Livingstone was not discouraged. At the end of 1860, at the mouth of the river, the *Ma-Robert*, which had been leaking for two years, finally sank in a sandbank. A new steamer, the *Pioneer*, sent out by the government at Livingstone's request, arrived early in 1861. With it came the first party of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, led by its new bishop, Charles Frederick Mackenzie.

The young men of Cambridge and Oxford had answered Livingstone's appeal. They had come to do the work he had begun.

Magomero

"The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."
— Isaiah 61:1, ASV

The Bishop

Charles Frederick Mackenzie was thirty-five, a Cambridge mathematician who had served as a clergyman in Natal and had been consecrated in Cape Town as the first bishop of the Universities' Mission. He was cheerful, brave, humble and devout, and he admired Livingstone enormously. With him came a small party of clergy and laymen, among them Henry Burrup, Lovell Procter, Henry Rowley, Henry Scudamore, a doctor named John Dickinson, and a lay superintendent named Horace Waller, who would become one of Livingstone's closest friends. They arrived at the mouth of the Zambezi early in 1861, expecting to be led to the healthy highlands Livingstone had described.

Livingstone did not take them there at once. He had become anxious to find a route into the interior that did not pass through Portuguese territory, where officials were involved in the slave trade and suspicious of British intentions. He insisted on first trying the Rovuma River, far to the north.

The *Pioneer* went a short way up it and found it too shallow. Months were lost. Only in the middle of 1861 did the mission party reach the Shire Highlands, by the familiar route up the Shire.

The Slave Party at Mbame's

In the middle of July 1861, as the expedition and the missionaries were walking up into the highlands, they arrived at the village of a chief named Mbame. As they rested there, a long line of captives came into the village: men, women and children, the men fastened by the neck in heavy forked sticks, the women and children tied together with ropes, driven by armed men who were blowing horns as if in triumph. When the drivers saw the Englishmen, they fled. Livingstone recognised one of them as a man who had belonged to a former Portuguese commandant of Tete.

The captives were released. The Englishmen cut the ropes and sawed through the slave-sticks, and the people, who had been expecting to be sold, were told that they were free. The *Narrative* describes how the captives knelt and clapped their hands in thanks. They told what had happened on the march. A woman, they said, had been killed because she could not carry both her load and her baby, and the baby had been killed with her. A man who had collapsed from exhaustion had been killed with an axe and left by the path. There were eighty-four of them, most of them women and children.

Among the children freed in these weeks, by the usual account, was a Yao boy of about ten or eleven named Chuma, who had been taken from his home and family by raiders. He was put into the care of the mission. Thirteen years later, he would help carry Livingstone's body to the sea.

Liberty to the Captives

Jesus began his ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth by reading from the scroll of Isaiah the passage at the head of this chapter, and saying, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21, ASV). In Luke's version, the words are "to proclaim release to the captives ... to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18, ASV). Christians have argued for centuries about how literally to take them. Is Jesus speaking of freedom from sin, or freedom from chains?

At Mbame's village, for once, the answer was both, and there was no need to choose. Eighty-four people who had been bound were set free, and the men who freed them did it in the name of Christ. It is one of the clearest moments in Livingstone's life, and one of the few in which his campaign against the slave trade bore immediate, visible fruit. It was also, as the following weeks showed, the beginning of a terrible entanglement.

Fighting

The freed captives became the nucleus of the mission's first settlement, at a place called Magomero, where a Mang'anja chief named Chigunda welcomed the missionaries. But the Shire Highlands were in turmoil. Groups of Yao people, themselves displaced by wars and famine to the east, were moving into the highlands, raiding Mang'anja villages and selling captives to the coastal traders. The Mang'anja were defenceless against them.

A few days after the release at Mbame's, Livingstone, Mackenzie and their party came upon a Yao raiding band that had just burned a village. Livingstone tried to talk to them. The Yao, according to his account, opened fire, and the expedition fired back. Several of the raiders were killed.

It was the first time that Livingstone had led men into a fight in which people were killed, and he was deeply troubled by it. He had always said that a missionary should never use force. Now he had.

He advised Mackenzie not to become involved in the fighting between the Yao and the Mang'anja. Then he went back to the river, to continue exploring Lake Nyasa. Mackenzie, left among people who begged him to protect them and who were being killed and enslaved before his eyes, decided that he could not stand by. He accompanied Mang'anja forces on several armed expeditions against Yao raiders, and freed more captives. A bishop of the Church of England had gone to war.

When the news reached Britain, there was outrage. Some blamed Mackenzie for betraying his calling. Some blamed Livingstone, who had led the first fight and then left the bishop to face its consequences. Livingstone, characteristically, defended his own conduct and was cautious in defending Mackenzie's. It is hard, at this distance, to judge either man. They were trying to protect people from being enslaved, in a country without law, with no help from any government. Most Christians would not want to say that they should have done nothing. Most would also want to say that the consequences of using force were unpredictable and grave, and that the mission paid for them.

The Island at the Ruo

At the end of 1861, Livingstone arranged with Mackenzie to meet him in January at the point where the Ruo River joins the Shire, on a certain date. Mackenzie was expecting his sister and the wife of Henry Burrup to arrive from Britain, and Livingstone was going down to the coast to bring them up, together with Mary Livingstone and the sections of a new steamer, the *Lady Nyassa*, which Livingstone had paid for himself.

Livingstone did not keep the appointment. The *Pioneer* was delayed, and then went aground on sandbanks in the lower Shire. Mackenzie and Burrup, meanwhile, set out down the river by canoe to meet him. Their canoe overturned, and they lost their medicines. They waited on an island near the mouth of the Ruo, in the rainy season, without quinine. Both fell ill with fever. Mackenzie died on 31 January 1862. Burrup, who struggled back to Magomero, died soon after.

Livingstone heard the news when the *Pioneer* finally reached the Ruo. Mary was with him, and so were Miss Mackenzie and Mrs Burrup, who had come all the way from England to join their brother and husband and now learned that they were dead. Livingstone wrote in his journal that the death of Mackenzie would hurt the mission terribly, and that he feared it would hurt his own cause too. Some of the missionaries never forgave him for not keeping the appointment. He said that he could not help it. Both things were true.

Waller

The mission did not die at once, but it never recovered. More of its members died in the following year, including Scudamore and Dickinson. In 1863 a new bishop, William Tozer, arrived, decided that the Shire Highlands were impossible, and withdrew the mission first to a mountain station and then, in 1864, to Zanzibar. Livingstone was bitter about the retreat, and said so. In Zanzibar, the Universities' Mission began again, among freed slaves and on the mainland opposite, and from there, over the next century, it built churches across what are now Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique, with African priests and bishops. It returned to Lake Nyasa in the 1880s. The tragedy at Magomero was not the end of the story.

Horace Waller stayed until the end. When the mission withdrew, he refused to abandon the freed captives who had been in its care, and he took a number of them south to the Cape, where he found homes and work for them. He was a big, warm, practical man, and he and Livingstone formed a friendship that lasted the rest of Livingstone's life. It was Waller who would edit Livingstone's last journals, and who would sit with Chuma and Susi in England, writing down their account of his death.

Two of the freed boys stayed with Livingstone himself. Chuma and another boy, Wikatani, travelled with the expedition for the rest of its time on the Zambezi and the Shire, and became part of his household. Livingstone was fond of them both, and they of him. Their story, and Chuma's especially, runs through the rest of this book. It is worth noticing that the most lasting fruit of the Magomero mission was not a church building or a station, but a handful of freed children who grew up into men and women of their own.

Isaiah's great passage about liberty to the captives goes on to promise that those who were freed will "build the old wastes" and "raise up the former desolations" (Isaiah 61:4, ASV). The people freed at Mbame's did not build the Shire Highlands. Many of them died, in the famine and fighting of the following years. But one of them, the boy Chuma, would live to carry the man who freed him a thousand miles through Africa. The prophet's promise was kept, in a way the prophet's readers would not have predicted.

Shupanga

"Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, And saveth such as are of a contrite spirit."
— Psalm 34:18, ASV

Ma-Robert

This book has said a good deal about what Mary Livingstone suffered. It should also say who she was, because the story of her marriage has usually been told from her husband's side, and she has too often appeared in it only as the woman who waited.

She was the daughter of missionaries and had grown up among the Batswana. She spoke Setswana from childhood, as her husband never quite did. At Mabotsa, Chonuane and Kolobeng she ran the infant school, taught sewing, made soap and candles and clothes, kept a household going in a country where every necessity had to be made by hand or carried hundreds of miles, and nursed the sick. She bore five children in less than six years, in mud-walled houses and ox-wagons, one of them on the bank of a river in the bush, and a sixth some years later. She went with her husband across the thirstland in 1850 and again in 1851, pregnant both times. The Batswana called her Ma-Robert, mother of Robert, in the respectful way of the country, and the people of Kolobeng remembered her with affection. She was not a frail Victorian lady dragged unwillingly into Africa. She was

an African missionary's daughter, tough and capable, who knew exactly what the life involved.

What broke her was not Africa. It was separation: the years in Britain without her husband, and then, after 1858, the years at Kuruman and in Scotland, away from him again, with her children divided between continents. In the letters of these years there are signs of depression, of anger, and of a faith that had grown dark. Those who saw her in Scotland in 1860 and 1861 found her unhappy and restless. She was determined to rejoin her husband. She left her children with relatives and friends in Scotland, among them her baby Anna Mary, and sailed for the Zambezi.

The Arrival

She arrived at the mouth of the Zambezi at the end of January 1862, on the brig *Hetty Ellen*, together with the sections of the *Lady Nyassa*, the steamer Livingstone had paid for out of the profits of his book to carry on Lake Nyasa, and with Miss Mackenzie and Mrs Burrup, who were coming to join the bishop and his colleague. With them, too, was a young Scottish minister, James Stewart, who had come to see whether the Free Church of Scotland should start a mission in the region.

It was the worst possible time. The rainy season had begun. The *Pioneer*, laden with the women, their baggage and part of the steamer, struggled for weeks up the Zambezi and the Shire against the shallows. When at last they reached the Ruo, they learned that Mackenzie and Burrup were dead. The two women went back down to the coast and home. Mary stayed.

The *Lady Nyassa* had to be assembled before it could be used, and Livingstone decided to put it together at Shupanga, on the south bank of the lower Zambezi, where there was an old Portuguese house and a good

landing place. For three months the expedition worked there, in the heat and the rain, bolting together the iron hull. Mary lived in the house at Shupanga with her husband. For a few weeks, after so many years, they were together.

27 April 1862

Around the middle of April, Mary fell ill with fever. At first it seemed like the many fevers she had survived before. Then it grew worse. She became delirious, and the treatments that usually worked, Livingstone's own quinine and purgatives, had no effect. Kirk, who was with them, did what he could. On 27 April 1862, in the evening, she died, with her husband beside her. She was forty-one.

She was buried the next day under a great baobab tree near the house at Shupanga, after a short service. A stone was later put up to mark the place.

The First Heavy Stroke

Livingstone was devastated. He had seen death all his life, as a doctor and a traveller, and he had lost his baby daughter Elizabeth at Kolobeng. But nothing had prepared him for this. His journal, as Blaikie printed it, records his grief with a simplicity that is more moving than any eloquence. What follows gives its substance closely, though not word for word.

He wrote that this was the first heavy blow he had suffered, and that it took away all his strength. He had wept over her, he wrote, and she deserved many tears. He had loved her when he married her, and the longer he lived with her the more he loved her. He thought of the children, who had all been tenderly attached to her, and asked God to pity them. He himself, he

wrote, was left alone in the world by one whom he had felt to be a part of himself.

A few days later he wrote again, addressing her as though she could hear him. He remembered how often they had longed for a quiet home, since they had been cast adrift at Kolobeng. And he wrote a sentence that tells us more about him than any account of his journeys: for the first time in his life, he said, he felt willing to die.

The verse at the head of this chapter promises that God is near to the broken-hearted. Livingstone's heart was broken at Shupanga, perhaps more completely than at any other time in his life. He did not lose his faith. His journal entries are full of prayer, of hope for heaven, of trust that Mary had gone a little before him. But they are also full of a grief that does not hurry to be comforted, and they show a man who had suddenly, too late, seen what his marriage had cost.

Regret

He wrote to Mary's mother, and to his children, and to friends. In some of these letters he defended himself, saying that Mary had insisted on coming, as she had, and that he could not have prevented it. In others the defence slips, and something else comes through: the knowledge that she had come because he had left her alone so long that she could not bear it, and that she had died in the country he had brought her to, in the service of plans that had already gone wrong.

It would be cruel to blame him for her death. Malaria killed thousands of Europeans and countless Africans in the Zambezi valley, and there was no reliable protection against it. Mary chose to come, against advice, because she wanted to be with her husband. But it would be dishonest not to say that the shape of her whole married life, its separations and

wanderings and loneliness, was given to it by his choices, and that those choices were made with too little thought for her. Livingstone knew that, at Shupanga. Whether he ever said it plainly, even to God, we cannot know. Grief and guilt are often too tangled for anyone to separate.

The psalm promises more than God's nearness to the broken-hearted. It says that he "saveth such as are of a contrite spirit." Contrition is grief that sees its own share in the wound. There are hints of contrition in Livingstone's journal after Mary's death. There is not much of it in the rest of his life. He went back to work, as he always did, and work was both his comfort and his escape.

The Grave Under the Baobab

Mary Livingstone was not the only person to die at Shupanga. The Zambezi valley in those years was full of graves, of missionaries and sailors and expedition members, and of the African people of the river, who died of fever, famine and the slave raids in far greater numbers. Mary's grave was marked, and visited, and remembered. Most of the others were not.

But her grave deserves its marker. She was a missionary in her own right, born to the work and faithful in it for most of her life. She endured more than most of the heroes of the missionary movement, and she has been remembered less. Victorian accounts made her a footnote to her husband. Some later accounts made her a victim, or a problem. She was a woman who loved a difficult man and the Africa in which she had been born, who suffered greatly, whose faith wavered and, as far as we can tell, held, and who died where she had wanted to be, beside him.

Paul writes of believers "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10, ASV). It is a fair epitaph for Mary Moffat Livingstone.

She had very little in this world. She gave a great deal. The church has been slow to say so.

Back to Work

Within days of the funeral, Livingstone was at work again on the *Lady Nyassa*. The steamer was launched in June 1862. But the river had fallen, and it could not be taken up the Shire until the rains returned at the end of the year. Livingstone went off to try the Rovuma again, hoping still for a route to Lake Nyasa outside Portuguese control. The expedition, which had lost its purpose at Kebrabasa, was now losing its members and its credit with the government at home. It had perhaps a year left to run, and the worst of that year would fall not on its members but on the people of the Shire valley.

Recalled

"we are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed."
— 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, ASV

The Valley of Death

When the rains came at the end of 1862, Livingstone took the *Pioneer* back up the Shire, towing the *Lady Nyassa*, which he intended to carry in pieces past the Murchison Cataracts and reassemble on Lake Nyasa. He found the valley transformed.

Three years earlier, the Shire valley had been one of the most fertile and populous places he had seen, with large villages and fields of cotton and grain. Now it was a wilderness. A severe drought had destroyed the harvests. At the same time, slave-raiding bands working for a Portuguese-African trader named Mariano, together with Yao raiders from the east, had swept through the region, burning villages and carrying off thousands of people. Those who escaped had fled into the hills or the marshes, where many starved. The *Narrative* records that the bodies of the dead floated down the river past the steamer every day, and that in the mornings the paddle wheels had to be cleared of corpses. The expedition members walked through deserted villages full of skeletons.

Livingstone was shattered by what he saw. The country he had opened, and had described to the world as the most promising field for missions and trade in Central Africa, had become a graveyard. He blamed the Portuguese, whose officials, he believed, protected and profited from the slave traders, and he wrote about them in the *Narrative* with an anger that caused a diplomatic incident. Some historians have since asked whether the expedition itself contributed to the disaster, by opening the Shire to outsiders, arming the Makololo who stayed behind, and drawing attention to the region. The drought and the raids had causes of their own that had nothing to do with Livingstone. But it is a painful fact that the valley he had hoped to save was devastated within a few years of his arrival.

Pressed on Every Side

The verse at the head of this chapter is Paul's description of his own ministry, written to a church that doubted him: pressed on every side, yet not crushed; perplexed, yet not in despair; persecuted, yet not forsaken; struck down, yet not destroyed. Paul does not pretend that he is not pressed or perplexed. He insists only that the pressure has not destroyed him, because the power at work in him is God's, not his own.

The years 1862 to 1864 were the worst of Livingstone's life up to that point. His wife was dead. His bishop was dead. His expedition was failing, his colleagues were leaving, and the country he loved was being destroyed before his eyes. He was perplexed, and he was struck down. He was not, by any account, destroyed. He kept a journal through it all, and it records grief and anger and much self-justification, but it also records prayer, and a stubborn refusal to believe that God had abandoned Africa or him. It was in these years that he began to say, more clearly than before, that his great

work was not to found missions or open trade routes but to expose the slave trade to the world, so that the world would act to stop it.

The Recall

The expedition's members were leaving one by one. Kirk and Charles Livingstone, both seriously ill, went home in May 1863. Kirk had served loyally for five years, and Livingstone parted from him on good terms, but Kirk's private journals from the expedition record sharp criticisms of his leader's judgement, his temper, and his treatment of the others. They were not written for publication, and they were not unfair.

In July 1863 a letter arrived from the Foreign Secretary, Lord Russell, recalling the expedition. The government had spent a great deal of money on it, and it had produced, as far as the government could see, a blocked river, a dead bishop, a failed mission, angry Portuguese allies and a series of resignations. The expedition was to end by the close of the year. Livingstone accepted the decision without protest, though he was bitterly hurt.

Before he left, he made one more journey on foot, in the second half of 1863, walking west and north from the Shire towards the slave routes west of Lake Nyasa. He wanted to see where the captives came from and where they went. He saw enough. When he came back, he took the two steamers down the Shire on the floods of early 1864 and handed the *Pioneer* over to the navy.

Across the Indian Ocean

That left the *Lady Nyassa*, his own ship, bought with the profits of *Missionary Travels*. He could have sold it to the Portuguese, but he would

not, because he feared it would be used in the slave trade. He decided to sell it in India instead. In April 1864 he sailed it out of Zanzibar for Bombay, two and a half thousand miles across the Indian Ocean, in a small river steamer never meant for the open sea. His crew was a handful of Europeans and a group of young African men from the Zambezi, among them Chuma and Wikatani, the two boys freed in the Shire Highlands. Livingstone had never captained a ship. He navigated by his own observations, and the monsoon was about to break. The voyage took about six weeks. They arrived safely in June 1864, to the astonishment of everyone who saw the little ship come into Bombay harbour.

It was a reckless thing to do, and it was also one of the most remarkable feats of seamanship of the time. It is a fair picture of Livingstone at his best and worst: brave, resourceful, unwilling to let a principle go, and so careless of risk that he took a dozen other lives into his hands on a gamble. The African crew members, who had never been to sea before, showed as much courage as he did. Chuma and Wikatani were left in Bombay to be educated at a mission school, and Livingstone went on to England.

Robert

He reached London in July 1864. Waiting for him was the news of his eldest son.

Robert Livingstone was eighteen. He had been the most troubled of the children, angry, unsettled and resentful of his father's absence. In 1863 he had been sent to Natal, in South Africa, with the intention that he would go on to join his father on the Zambezi. He did not go on. Instead he took ship for America and, in Boston, enlisted in the Union army in the American Civil War under a false name, Rupert Vincent. He wrote to his father that he had taken another name so as not to bring further dishonour

on his family. He was wounded, captured, and taken to the Confederate prison at Salisbury, North Carolina, where he died in December 1864. His father did not learn the details of his death until later.

It is a heartbreaking story, and it belongs in a book about Livingstone, because Robert's life was shaped by his father's calling as surely as Mary's was. Livingstone loved his children and wrote them many affectionate and earnest letters, full of advice and of prayers for their souls. But he was rarely present, and when he was, he was a stern and demanding father, as his own father had been. Paul wrote, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, ASV). Robert was provoked, and the nurture came mostly by letter. Livingstone grieved for him, and he seems to have blamed Robert more than himself. That, too, was characteristic.

Newstead

He spent most of the following year in Britain. For several months he lived at Newstead Abbey, the old home of Lord Byron in Nottinghamshire, as the guest of William Frederick Webb, a friend from his hunting days at Kolobeng. There, with his brother Charles, he wrote the *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi*, published in 1865. It defended the expedition, attacked the Portuguese, and passed lightly over its quarrels and failures. It did not sell nearly as well as *Missionary Travels*.

He spent time with his children, who were growing up without him. In June 1865 his mother died in Hamilton, and he went north to bury her. He spoke at the British Association, attacking the Portuguese slave trade. And he began to plan his next journey.

The idea came from Sir Roderick Murchison and the Royal Geographical Society. The great unsolved question of African geography

was the source of the Nile. Several explorers had claimed to find it, at Lake Victoria or Lake Albert, and the claims were disputed. Murchison suggested that Livingstone should go to the region between Lake Nyasa and Lake Tanganyika, find the watershed, and settle the question. Livingstone agreed, on one condition: that he should go as a missionary, not only as a geographer. He wrote that he would not go simply as a geographer, but as a missionary, and do geography by the way. He also intended to see the slave routes for himself, and to expose them.

The government gave him a small grant and the title of consul, without a salary, to the rulers of the interior. His friend James Young gave him a thousand pounds. In August 1865 he left Britain for the last time. He was fifty-two. He went by way of Paris, where he left his daughter Agnes at school, and Bombay, where he sold the *Lady Nyassa* at a loss and recruited men. In January 1866 he arrived at Zanzibar.

The Sentence of Death

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."
— Hebrews 11:8, ASV

The Last Party

Livingstone left Zanzibar in March 1866 and landed near the mouth of the Rovuma River, on the mainland coast of what is now southern Tanzania. His party was an odd one. There were thirteen sepoys, Indian soldiers from the Bombay Marine Battalion, lent by the government of Bombay. There were ten men from the island of Anjouan in the Comoros, known as the Johanna men, under a headman named Musa, who had served on the Zambezi. There were nine African youths from a mission school at Nasik, in western India, run by the Church Missionary Society for children freed from slave ships. There were two men from Shupanga on the Zambezi, one of whom was Susi, who had worked for the expedition as a woodcutter and had sailed with Livingstone to Bombay. And there were the two Yao boys freed in the Shire Highlands, Chuma and Wikatani, now young men, who had come back from their school in Bombay to join him. With them came camels, buffaloes, mules and donkeys, which Livingstone wanted to test against the tsetse fly.

The animals died within months, of tsetse and of neglect. The sepoys, who had no wish to be in Africa and found the work hard, quarrelled with the others, mistreated the animals, lagged behind, and were eventually sent back to the coast. Livingstone was not a good manager of a mixed and unwilling party, and he admitted as much in his journal.

The Road of the Slaves

The route inland from the Rovuma to Lake Nyasa was one of the main slave roads of East Africa. Livingstone had come to see it, and he saw it. His journal records, day after day, the evidence along the path: a woman tied by the neck to a tree and left dead; others shot or stabbed and lying in the path; people who had collapsed under their loads and been killed, or simply abandoned to starve. He was told that the traders killed those who could not keep up, in anger at losing the money they had paid for them, and to frighten the others into marching faster. The country was depopulated. Villages had been burned, fields abandoned, and those who remained lived in fear.

He wrote it all down, without rhetoric, as evidence. He meant his journal to be read, and he meant it to make Britain act. In the years that followed, these plain entries did more for the campaign against the East African slave trade than any speech he made.

Wikatani and Musa

In August 1866, near the southern end of Lake Nyasa, Wikatani found his own people. He had been taken from this region as a child, and now he met relatives he had thought were lost to him. He asked to stay with them, and Livingstone let him go, with some sadness and with gifts. It was the kind of

ending Livingstone had hoped the gospel might bring to freed captives: a return home, with something learned and nothing lost. We do not know what became of Wikatani afterwards.

A month later, Musa and the Johanna men deserted. They had heard rumours that the country ahead was being raided by the Ngoni, a militarised people who had moved north from southern Africa a generation before, and they were afraid. When Livingstone insisted on going on, they turned back. To excuse their desertion, they told the authorities at Zanzibar that Livingstone had been killed by the Ngoni, and they gave a detailed description of his death. The story was believed. Obituaries were published in Britain. The Royal Geographical Society sent out a small expedition under E. D. Young, a naval officer who had served on the Zambezi, which went up the Shire to Lake Nyasa in 1867 and found evidence that Livingstone had passed safely and that Musa had lied. By then Livingstone was hundreds of miles away.

The Medicine Chest

The party, now small, pressed north-west into the high country between Lake Nyasa and Lake Tanganyika. It was the rainy season. Food was scarce, because the slave raids had destroyed the harvests, and they were often hungry. Christmas 1866 was spent with almost nothing to eat. Livingstone grew thin and weak.

Then, on 20 January 1867, two porters who had joined the party on the way ran off in the night. They took with them, among other things, the box that held all of Livingstone's medicines, including the quinine on which his life depended. He wrote in his journal that he felt as though he had now received the sentence of death, as poor Bishop Mackenzie had.

It was very nearly true. From that day, Livingstone had no defence against malaria, and it attacked him again and again. In the following months he suffered severe fevers, and on one occasion he lost consciousness and fell, waking to find that he could not remember what had happened. He was fifty-three, worn by twenty-five years of African travel, and he had just lost the means of keeping himself alive.

He did not turn back. He went on, with Susi, Chuma, the Nasik youths and whatever porters he could find, towards the great lakes of the interior. The verse at the head of this chapter describes Abraham, who went out "not knowing whither he went." Livingstone knew, in one sense, exactly where he was going: north, to the watershed, to find the source of the Nile. In another sense he had no idea. He did not know if he would live. He did not know whether anyone at home knew that he was alive. He went on, he believed, because God had called him, and because the slave trade had to be seen and written down.

With the Traders

Here the story takes a turn that the Victorian biographies passed over quickly, and that modern historians have rightly emphasised. Without medicines, without money, without enough men or goods to pay his way, Livingstone could not travel alone in the interior. The only people who could protect and feed him were the very people he had come to expose: the Arab-Swahili traders from Zanzibar who dealt in ivory and slaves.

From 1867 onwards, he travelled for long periods with their caravans, ate their food, accepted their help and their hospitality, and depended on their goodwill. One of them was a powerful young trader named Hamed bin Muhammed, later famous under the name Tippu Tip, who would become the most powerful man in the eastern Congo. Livingstone found

many of the traders courteous and generous to him personally, and he wrote of their kindness. He also watched what they did to the people of the country, and recorded it.

It was a terrible position for a man whose life's cause was the destruction of the slave trade. He could not stop what he saw. He could only write it down, and accept the protection of those who did it. He was not complicit in their trade. But he was dependent on it, and he knew it. The man who had set captives free at Mbame's village now ate at the table of the slavers, because otherwise he would die.

Lakes

In April 1867 he reached the southern end of Lake Tanganyika. In November he reached Lake Mweru, to the west, and visited the capital of the Lunda king Kazembe, a powerful ruler whose court had been visited by Portuguese travellers decades before. In July 1868 he reached Lake Bangweulu, a vast shallow lake surrounded by swamps, the farthest south of the great lakes of the region. He was the first European to describe it. He did not know that he would die near its shores five years later.

He was now convinced that the rivers flowing out of this region, through Lake Bangweulu and Lake Mweru and northward as the great river called the Lualaba, were the true sources of the Nile. He was wrong. The Lualaba flows into the Congo, not the Nile, as Stanley would prove a decade later. But Livingstone could not know that, and the hope that he was following the Nile to its fountains became, in his last years, almost an obsession. He wrote about the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, who had recorded a story of fountains of the Nile, and he hoped to find them and so to confirm the truth of an ancient record. His geography and his

faith became oddly entangled. To find the sources, he thought, would give him the fame and influence to end the slave trade.

Ujiji

At the end of 1868 he set out for Ujiji, the main trading town on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, where he had arranged for supplies to be sent from Zanzibar. He fell desperately ill on the way with pneumonia, coughing blood, unable to walk. A trader carried him in a litter part of the way, and then by canoe across the lake. He reached Ujiji on 14 March 1869, near death.

The supplies he had been counting on had been plundered. Most of the goods sent for him had been stolen or used up by those who carried them, and the letters he had been longing for were not there. He was nursed back to health, slowly, by Susi and Chuma and the others who were still with him. Then, as soon as he could walk, he set out again, westward, across the lake into the country called Manyema, to follow the Lualaba north.

Abraham, Hebrews says, "looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10, ASV). He never found it in his lifetime. He lived as a stranger in tents, and died, with the others of his kind, "not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar" (Hebrews 11:13, ASV). Livingstone was not looking for a heavenly city. He was looking for the fountains of the Nile, and they did not exist where he sought them. But underneath the geographical obsession there was something else, a longing for the end of the slave trade and the coming of the kingdom of God to Africa, and that longing was of Abraham's kind. He would not see it either. He would greet it from afar.

Nyangwe

"O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save."
— Habakkuk 1:2, ASV

Manyema

The country west of Lake Tanganyika, which the traders called Manyema, was in 1869 the new frontier of the ivory and slave trade. The Arab-Swahili traders from Zanzibar had only recently pushed into it, and they were taking ivory by trade where they could and by force where they could not. The people of Manyema, who had no guns, were raided, robbed and enslaved. Livingstone went into this country in the second half of 1869, with a handful of followers, in the company of traders, looking for the Lualaba.

He liked many of the people he met there, and his journal records their gardens, their markets, their crafts and their courtesy, as well as the fear in which they lived. The traders told lurid stories about the Manyema to justify how they treated them, and Livingstone sometimes repeated those stories and sometimes doubted them. What he did not doubt was that the people had done nothing to deserve what was being done to them.

It was the most miserable period of his life. He was ill again and again. In 1870, at a place called Bambarre, his feet broke out in ulcers that ate into

the flesh, so that he could not walk, and he was laid up for months in a hut. Most of the porters who had come with him had deserted. For a time only three of his followers stayed with him: Susi, Chuma, and a young man from the Nasik school called Gardner. They nursed him, foraged for food, and kept him alive.

In those months of illness, with nothing else to read, he read the Bible through four times. His journal records the readings, and the thoughts they prompted. It was the longest sustained reading of Scripture in his life, and it was done in a hut in Manyema, by a lame and lonely man who had no idea whether anyone outside Africa knew he was alive.

Men From Zanzibar

Early in 1871 a party of men arrived from Zanzibar to join him. They had been hired by an Indian merchant on behalf of the British consulate, where Livingstone's old colleague John Kirk was now the consul. They were slaves of Indian merchants, hired out by their owners, and they had no wish to go into the interior with a sick old man. They were insubordinate from the start, refused to go where he wanted, and stirred up trouble with the people of the country. Livingstone came to believe that Kirk had sent him bad men deliberately, or at least carelessly, and his letters from this time are full of bitter accusations against his former friend. They were unfair. Kirk had done what he could from Zanzibar. But Livingstone was ill, isolated and suspicious, and the old pattern of blaming others was stronger than ever.

With these men, in March 1871, he reached Nyangwe, a large market town on the bank of the Lualaba. The river was wide and flowed north. Livingstone was sure that it was the Nile. He needed canoes to follow it, and he spent months trying to buy them, without success. The traders did

not want him to go further, and the people of the town, who were afraid of everyone from the east, would not sell to him.

15 July 1871

Nyangwe held a great market every few days, to which hundreds of people, most of them women, came from the surrounding country to buy and sell food, pottery, cloth and other goods. On 15 July 1871 Livingstone went to the market as usual. By his published account, a quarrel broke out over a fowl. Then the men of a trader named Dugumbe, who had recently arrived at Nyangwe with a large armed following, opened fire on the crowd.

The massacre that followed was the most terrible thing Livingstone ever saw. The gunmen fired into the market and along the river bank. People fled to the river and tried to escape in canoes, which overturned in the crush, and many who could not swim were drowned. The gunmen went on firing at those in the water. Then Dugumbe's men crossed the river and burned the villages on the other side. Livingstone estimated that between three and four hundred people were killed, most of them women. Others have given different numbers. Whatever the count, it was a slaughter of unarmed people on a market day.

His published journal records his horror and his grief, his conviction that he had witnessed something from hell, and his prayer. As he wrote, he could hear the wailing for the dead from across the river. He wrote a short prayer that God's kingdom would come. It is the petition of the Lord's Prayer, but it comes here as a cry, almost a protest: a man who had spent his life asking God to bring his kingdom to Africa, watching the opposite of the kingdom come in front of him, and crying out for God to act.

How Long?

The prophet Habakkuk began his book with the same cry. "O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save." Habakkuk had seen injustice in his own people, and then he was told that God was sending the Babylonians, a people more violent still. He did not understand. He stood on his watchtower and waited for an answer, and the answer he was given was not an explanation, but a promise: "the righteous shall live by his faith," and "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:4, 14, ASV).

Livingstone was given no explanation for Nyangwe either. He could do nothing for the dead. He could not stop Dugumbe. He could only write what he had seen, and send it to the world, and pray. He did all three. His account of the massacre reached Britain in 1872 and was printed widely. It shocked the public and strengthened the campaign that was already gathering in Parliament against the East African slave trade, and it contributed to the pressure that led, in 1873, to the closing of the great slave market at Zanzibar. It was, in the end, perhaps the most effective thing he ever wrote.

What the Field Diary Showed

For more than a century, Livingstone's account of Nyangwe was known only from the *Last Journals*, edited by Waller from the large journal that Livingstone wrote up from his pocket notebooks. In the early twenty-first century, scholars working on the Livingstone Online project used spectral imaging to read his original field diary for 1871, written in improvised ink

on scraps of newspaper and faded almost to nothing. What they found complicated the story.

The field diary, written day by day, shows that the situation at Nyangwe before the massacre was more tangled than the published version suggests. Livingstone had been travelling and living under the protection of traders, including men associated with Dugumbe. The men from Zanzibar who were supposed to be his own followers had been involved in violence against local people in the weeks before. He seems to have feared, in the days after the massacre, that he himself would be associated with what had happened, and that the people of the country would see him as one of the traders. The later journal, written up with more care, gives a clearer and more morally straightforward account, in which Livingstone is purely a horrified observer.

The historians who studied the diary did not conclude that Livingstone had lied about the massacre, which certainly happened as a massacre, or that he bore responsibility for it. They did conclude that the published account was shaped, by Livingstone and then by Waller, to present him as more separate from the traders than he really was. It is a sobering finding. It is also, in a way, a very human one. A man who has seen something terrible, and has been closer to it than he wishes, will often tell the story in a way that puts more distance between himself and the evil. That is not the same as lying. But it is not the whole truth either, and a biography that wants the whole truth has to say so.

The Way Back

After the massacre Livingstone could not stay at Nyangwe. He would not travel with Dugumbe's men, and without them he could not go north. He turned back towards Ujiji, sick and broken in spirit. On the way, in August

1871, his party was ambushed in the forest by people who took them for slave traders, and he narrowly escaped death three times in a single day: a spear thrown at him missed him by inches, another passed close behind him, and a great tree, set on fire and cut nearly through, crashed down a yard from where he walked. He recorded each escape in his journal, and thanked God.

He reached Ujiji in late October 1871, according to his own reckoning, which by then had gone astray by several weeks. He was a skeleton. He found that the goods that had been sent there for him had been sold off by the man left in charge of them, who had assumed that he was dead. He had almost nothing left. He sat down in his house at Ujiji, among the few faithful men who had brought him back, and wondered how he would live.

He did not know that a young American journalist, with a large, well-supplied caravan, was marching towards Ujiji at that moment, looking for him.

"I Presume"

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, So is good news from a far country."
— Proverbs 25:25, ASV

The Journalist

Henry Morton Stanley was not, as he liked to suggest, an American. He had been born John Rowlands in north Wales in 1841, the illegitimate son of a young mother who did not keep him. He grew up partly in a workhouse, went to sea as a teenager, landed in New Orleans, took the name of a merchant who befriended him, fought on both sides of the American Civil War, and became a newspaper correspondent. In 1869, according to his own account, James Gordon Bennett, the owner of the *New York Herald*, summoned him and told him to go and find Livingstone, whatever it cost. Bennett wanted a story. Livingstone had not been heard from for years, and many believed he was dead.

Stanley took his time. He covered other assignments first, and reached Zanzibar only in January 1871. There, with Bennett's money, he assembled a large and well-equipped caravan, with nearly two hundred porters and soldiers, and set out for the interior in March. It was a hard march. Stanley drove his men brutally, with the whip, and several died on the way. He was ill himself, and fought his way through a war between Arab-Swahili traders

and the forces of a chief named Mirambo. Late in 1871 he approached Ujiji.

An Englishman

Livingstone's journal records how the news reached him. Susi came running as fast as he could, gasped out that he had seen an Englishman, and ran off again to meet the stranger. Stanley's caravan was marching into Ujiji with the American flag at its head and the porters firing their guns in salute. The whole town came out to see.

Stanley's account of the meeting is one of the most famous passages in the literature of travel. He describes walking through the crowd towards a pale, grey-bearded old man in a faded blue cap and a red-sleeved waistcoat, standing in front of his house with a few of his men. He wanted to run to him, he says, and to embrace him, but he did not know how an Englishman would receive such a thing. So, in Stanley's own account, he walked up deliberately, took off his hat, and said, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

Livingstone said yes, by Stanley's account, with a kind smile, lifting his cap slightly. They shook hands, and Stanley thanked God that he had been permitted to see him. Livingstone replied that he was thankful to be there to welcome him.

The four famous words have been quoted, parodied and repeated for a century and a half. It is worth knowing how fragile our evidence for them is. They come from Stanley alone. The pages of his diary for the days around the meeting are missing, and his first newspaper report and his book do not give exactly the same wording. Even the date is uncertain. Stanley gave 10 November 1871 in his book, but other versions of his writing give 3 November, and Livingstone's own journal, whose dating had gone wrong during his illness, points to late October. The greeting may have been

spoken as Stanley reported it. It may have been improved in the telling. What is not in doubt is that the two men met at Ujiji that autumn, and that the meeting saved Livingstone's life.

New Life

Stanley had brought food, medicine, cloth, letters and news. Livingstone had been near starvation, and within days, with good food and company, he began to recover. Stanley reported that the old man kept telling him that he had brought him new life. Livingstone's own journal speaks of the overwhelming kindness of Bennett in sending Stanley, and of Stanley in carrying it out, and of his gratitude.

The proverb at the head of this chapter fits the moment exactly: "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, So is good news from a far country." Livingstone had had no reliable news for years. Stanley told him of the opening of the Suez Canal, the war between France and Prussia, the deaths of public men, and events in his own family. There were letters from his children. Livingstone devoured all of it. He had been more alone than almost any man alive, and now he was not.

Four Months

The two men spent about four months together. In November and December 1871 they explored the northern end of Lake Tanganyika by canoe, to see whether a river flowed out of it there, which might connect the lake to the Nile. They found that the river at the northern end, the Rusizi, flowed into the lake, not out of it. Tanganyika was not the source of the Nile. Livingstone took the news calmly. He still believed that the Lualaba, farther west, was the Nile.

Then they walked east together to Unyanyembe, near the modern town of Tabora, where Stanley had left stores. They arrived in February 1872. Stanley urged Livingstone to come home with him. He was old, ill and worn out; his family wanted him; the world wanted to see him. Livingstone refused. He would not go home, he said, until he had finished his work, which meant tracing the sources of the Nile, and he believed that he was close. Stanley promised to send him men and supplies from the coast.

Stanley's Portrait

Stanley came to Ujiji as a hard-bitten journalist who had expected, by his own admission, to find a difficult and perhaps unpleasant man. He left as Livingstone's devoted admirer. His book, *How I Found Livingstone*, published later in 1872, contains a long portrait of him that is one of the most valuable descriptions we have, because it comes from an outsider who lived with him day after day.

He described Livingstone's gentleness, his humour, his patience, his love of a joke, his kindness to his men and theirs to him, and his refusal to complain. And he described his faith. Livingstone's religion, Stanley wrote, was not of the theoretical kind, but a constant, earnest, sincere practice, neither demonstrative nor loud, but quiet and practical and always at work. Every Sunday Livingstone held a short service for his men. He read the Bible daily. He did not preach at Stanley, but Stanley was moved by what he saw.

Stanley's portrait was not the whole truth. He did not see, or chose not to mention, Livingstone's bitterness against Kirk, his capacity for resentment, or the darker side of the years in Manyema. His Livingstone is a saint, and Stanley needed a saint for his story. But he saw something real,

and his testimony matters because he had no reason, when he set out, to admire a missionary.

It is also worth remembering what Stanley became. In later years he led expeditions that killed many Africans, and he worked for King Leopold II of Belgium in establishing the Congo Free State, a regime of forced labour and terror that killed vast numbers of Congolese people. Livingstone could not have foreseen that. But it is one of the ironies of his life that the man who found him, and whose book made him an icon, went on to serve the most brutal colonial regime in Africa, in the very basin of the river Livingstone had thought was the Nile.

The Parting

On 14 March 1872, Stanley left Unyanyembe for the coast. He carried Livingstone's journal, sealed, to be delivered to his daughter Agnes, and a bundle of letters, among them letters for the *New York Herald* describing the slave trade. In his writing on the slave trade from these months at Unyanyembe, intended for the American public, Livingstone set down the sentence that would be carved on his tomb: a prayer, made in his solitude, that Heaven's rich blessing would come down on everyone, whether American, English or Turk, who would help "to heal this open sore of the world." It was not among his last words, as the Abbey inscription would later suggest, but was written about a year before his death, and it names Americans first, perhaps because he was writing for American readers. It is a prayer for anyone, of any nation, who would act.

The two men walked a little way together, and then parted. Stanley wrote that he turned away weeping. He never saw Livingstone again.

Five days later, on 19 March 1872, Livingstone turned fifty-nine. He wrote in his journal: "Birthday. My Jesus, my king, my life, my all; I again

dedicate my whole self to Thee." He went on to ask God to accept him, and to grant that before the year was out he might finish his task, and he asked it in the name of Jesus.

It is the most quoted prayer he ever wrote, and it deserves to be. It is not a prayer for success, or for fame, or even for health. It is a prayer of renewed self-giving, made by a man who had given himself so often that the act had become a kind of habit, and who still found it necessary to do it again. He asked to finish his task within the year. He very nearly did, though not in the way he hoped.

Waiting at Unyanyembe

For five months after Stanley left, Livingstone waited at Unyanyembe for the men Stanley had promised to send. He read, wrote letters, worked over his notes and maps, and recovered some of his strength. He wrote to his children, and in a letter to his daughter Agnes he said, in effect, that if God allowed him to help bring the inland slave trade to an end, he would not regret all his hunger and toil. The fame he cared about by now was not the fame of a discoverer. It was the influence that might move governments.

The men arrived in August 1872: some fifty-seven porters hired at the coast, and with them a group of young Africans from the mission school at Nasik in India, sent to join him. Among them was a young man of about twenty named Jacob Wainwright, a Yao by birth, who had been taken by slave traders as a boy, freed by a British warship, and educated by the Church Missionary Society in India. He could read and write English well, and he kept a diary. He would be one of those who carried Livingstone home.

Chitambo's Village

"Precious in the sight of Jehovah Is the death of his saints."
— Psalm 116:15, ASV

The Company

On 25 August 1872, Livingstone left Unyanyembe for the last time. His plan was to go south along the eastern side of Lake Tanganyika, then round the southern end of Lake Bangweulu, and then north-west to the Lualaba, to trace the fountains that he still believed fed the Nile. He reckoned that it would take a few months.

His company numbered something over sixty people. At its heart were the men who had been with him for years: Susi, who had joined him on the Zambezi; Chuma, freed as a boy in the Shire Highlands; and a few others who had come back with him from Manyema. With them were the young men from Nasik, among them Jacob Wainwright, Carus Farrar and Matthew Wellington. There was a boy named Majwara, who served Livingstone personally and slept at the door of his hut. There were women too, the wives of some of the men, among them Halima, the wife of one of the Shupanga men, who cooked for Livingstone and whom he valued highly, and a young woman called Ntaoeka. And there were the porters hired at the coast. These people are named here because, in the next nine

months, they would decide what happened to David Livingstone, living and dead.

The Swamps

The journey went badly from the start. Livingstone's geography was confused; his calculations of position had gone wrong, and he thought Lake Bangweulu lay farther east than it did. The party went too far east and found itself, when the rains came at the end of 1872, approaching the lake from the wrong side, in a vast country of swamps and flooded grassland.

From January to April 1873 they waded. For days on end the path lay through water, sometimes knee-deep, sometimes waist-deep, sometimes up to the chest, with the rain falling on them and leeches in the water. They crossed rivers by canoe when they could find canoes, and by wading when they could not. The local people were often unwilling to help, and sometimes hostile, because they had suffered from slave raiders. Food was scarce. The porters grew sullen and some deserted. And Livingstone was dying.

He had suffered for years from dysentery, and now he began to bleed heavily from the bowels. He grew weaker and weaker from loss of blood. He could no longer walk far. By April he could not walk at all, and the men carried him in a litter, a *kitanda*, made of a framework of poles with grass and a blanket, slung between two men. Even that jolting was agony. His journal entries, which had always been full and careful, grow shorter and shorter, and the handwriting falters.

On 19 March 1873 he turned sixty, in the swamps. He wrote a few lines of thanks to God for sparing him so far on the journey of life, wondered whether he could still hope for success when so many obstacles had arisen,

and prayed that Satan would not prevail over him. Even now, his mind was on finishing the work.

The Last Entries

On 21 April he tried to ride a donkey, but was forced to lie down, and was carried back to the village exhausted. On 27 April he wrote his last entry. It begins, "Knocked up quite, and remain—recover—sent to buy milch-goats," and notes that they were on the banks of the Molilamo. After that, nothing. The notebook, in Waller's phrase, dropped from his hand.

On 29 April the men carried him across the Molilamo River and to the village of a chief named Chitambo, in a district called Ilala, south of Lake Bangweulu in what is now Zambia. They built him a hut, and laid him in it on a bed of sticks and grass. Chitambo came to visit him on 30 April, but Livingstone was too ill to talk, and asked him to come back the next day.

The Last Night

What we know of that night comes from the men who were there, as they later told it to Horace Waller in England, and as he printed it in the *Last Journals*. Their account is the source of everything that follows. It was given by men who loved Livingstone and who had every reason to remember him well, and it was shaped by Waller, who loved him too. It is not a record taken at the time. It is testimony, and it should be read as testimony: precious, and not beyond question.

About eleven o'clock at night, Susi said, Livingstone called him, and asked him about the noise he could hear in the village, which was the people shouting to scare buffaloes away from their crops. A little later he asked whether this was the Luapula River, and Susi told him that they were

in Chitambo's village, near the Molilamo. He asked how many days it was to the Luapula, and Susi said he thought three days. Livingstone sighed and seemed to fall asleep. Around midnight he called Susi again, asked for hot water and for his medicine chest, and with great difficulty chose a dose of calomel. Then, in Susi's memory, he told Susi that all was well and that he could go out now. Those were the last words anyone heard him say.

4 a.m.

The boy Majwara was sleeping at the door of the hut, as he always did. Some time before dawn he woke and saw his master kneeling by the bed. He thought Livingstone was praying, and did not disturb him. Later he looked again, and saw that he had not moved. Frightened, he went and woke Susi, Chuma and some of the others. He told them, in the words Waller recorded, that when he had lain down Livingstone had been just as he was now, and that it was because he did not move that he feared he was dead.

The men came to the hut and looked in. Livingstone was kneeling by the side of the bed, his body stretched forward, his head buried in his hands upon the pillow. For a minute they watched him, and saw no sign of breathing. Then Matthew Wellington went softly forward and laid his hands on Livingstone's cheeks. The face was cold. He had been dead for some time.

The Date

The date of his death is not certain. Waller, working from the men's account and the last journal entries, gave it as 1 May 1873, and that is the date on his grave in Westminster Abbey and in most books. But the men

themselves, when they carved an inscription on a tree at Chitambo's village a few days later, gave the date as 4 May, and some of the early reports from the coast gave that date too. Livingstone's own dating had been unreliable for years, and the men were keeping their own count. Most historians accept 1 May, but the disagreement cannot now be settled, and it is a small sign of how much of this last scene rests on the memories of people who had other things on their minds than calendars.

On His Knees

The picture of Livingstone dying on his knees in prayer became the most famous image of his life. It was painted, engraved, preached on and printed in countless books. It made him, for the Victorian public, the perfect missionary saint: a man who had given everything, and who died in the act of prayer, alone in the heart of Africa.

It is right to hold the picture carefully. It comes from the testimony of Majwara, Susi, Chuma and Matthew, filtered through Waller. Some modern writers have suggested that a man bleeding to death from dysentery might have knelt by the bed for other reasons, or simply collapsed. We cannot know. What we can say is that the men who found him believed that he had died praying, and that this belief fits everything they knew of him. He had prayed every day of his life. He had knelt by his bed every night that he could. If he knelt there that night, in his last weakness, it would have been in character. If he died there, it was in a posture he had taken ten thousand times before.

The psalm at the head of this chapter says that the death of God's saints is precious in his sight. The psalmist was not saying that their deaths are beautiful, or that they come without pain. He was saying that God notices, and cares, and counts them costly. Livingstone died in a grass hut, in a

swamp, far from his family, of a slow and painful disease, with his work unfinished and his great geographical theory wrong. By the measure of the world, it was a miserable end. By the measure of the psalm, it was precious. God was not absent from Chitambo's village. He was present in the faith of a dying man, whatever his posture, and in the love of the people who sat with him.

The Watchers

That is the last thing to notice about this night. Livingstone did not die alone. The legend of the lonely hero in the heart of Africa forgets that there were sixty people around him, and that a handful of them had stayed with him for years, through famine and fever and the swamps, when they could easily have gone home. A boy slept at his door. A man answered his call at midnight and helped him find his medicine. A young man from Nasik laid his hands gently on his face. They were his family at the end, in a way his own children could not be.

In the morning, the men gathered outside the hut and talked about what to do. They were hundreds of miles from the coast, in hostile country, with a dead white man who was famous, as they knew, in a world they had only glimpsed. Some of the Nasik men could read and write; most of the others could not. No one would have blamed them if they had buried him there and gone home. What they decided to do instead is one of the great stories of loyalty in the history of Africa, and it is theirs, not his.

Faithful Hands

"And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him."
— Acts 8:2, ASV

The Council

The men who gathered outside the hut at Chitambo's village on the morning of Livingstone's death had several choices. They could bury him where he lay, as Africans and Europeans alike were usually buried in the interior, and go home. They could leave his body and his papers with the chief and walk away. Or they could try to take him to the coast, more than a thousand miles away, through country that was often hostile, where the carrying of a corpse would arouse fear and suspicion in every village they passed.

They decided to take him home. According to the account they later gave Waller, they met together and agreed to put themselves under the leadership of Susi and Chuma, the two men who had been with Livingstone longest, and to obey them as they had obeyed him. They agreed that the body would be preserved and carried to Zanzibar, together with his papers, instruments and belongings, so that his people could bury him in his own country and his work would not be lost. Nobody ordered them to do it. There was no one to order them. They chose it.

It is impossible to know all their reasons. They loved him; that much is clear from everything they said and did. Some of them also understood that he was an important man in the British world, and that it would go hard with them if they returned to Zanzibar without his body and his papers, and were suspected of having harmed him. Both motives may have been at work. Neither diminishes what they did.

The Heart in Africa

At first they kept the death secret from the people of the village, fearing that the chief would impose heavy fines or that the villagers would be alarmed by a death among strangers. When Chitambo learned of it, however, he behaved with great courtesy. He came with his people to mourn, with drums and the firing of guns, in the manner of the country, and he allowed the men to build a separate enclosure outside the village where the body could be prepared.

The men had no embalmer. One of them, Farijala, had worked for a doctor in Zanzibar and had watched him at work. With the help of Carus Farrar, he opened the body and removed the heart and other internal organs. These were placed in a tin box and buried in the earth beneath a large mpundu tree near the hut. A short service was read over them; Jacob Wainwright, who could read English, is said to have read the burial service from the Book of Common Prayer. Then Jacob carved an inscription in the bark of the tree, giving Livingstone's name and the date of his death, as the men reckoned it, 4 May 1873, together with some words of their own.

The body was filled with salt and laid out to dry in the sun for about two weeks. Then it was wrapped in calico, enclosed in a cylinder of bark, sewn up in sailcloth, tarred against the weather, and lashed to a pole so that

two men could carry it. His papers, journals, maps, instruments and the rest of his belongings were packed into loads.

The burial of his heart in Africa has become one of the best-loved details of his story, and it is often said that his African friends buried it there because his heart belonged to Africa. The Royal Geographical Society, which still holds the section of the tree with Jacob's inscription, records that this is what his companions said. It may also have been a practical necessity of preserving the body. Both things can be true. It is fitting, whatever the reason, that the heart of the man who loved Africa, and whose love was often clumsy and costly, should lie in African earth, buried by African hands.

A Thousand Miles

The journey to the coast took about five months. The company went north-east, back past Lake Bangweulu, across the high country towards Lake Tanganyika, and then east towards Unyanyembe. They suffered illness, hunger and hostility. Several of them died on the way. In some places the people would not let them pass with a corpse, and the men resorted to a stratagem: they made up a bundle that looked like a body, sent it back along the path as if returning it for burial, and disguised the real body as an ordinary bale of goods. At least once they had to fight their way through a village.

In October 1873, near Unyanyembe, they met an English expedition under a naval officer named Verney Lovett Cameron, which the Royal Geographical Society had sent out to relieve Livingstone. Cameron and his companions learned from Susi and Chuma that the man they had come to help was dead. Cameron advised them to bury the body there, saying that it would be safer and simpler. The men refused. They had carried him this

far, and they would carry him to the sea. Cameron took some of Livingstone's instruments, and the men went on.

They reached the coast at Bagamoyo, opposite Zanzibar, in February 1874, nine months after his death. They handed the body and the papers over to the acting British consul. A British warship took the body across to Zanzibar.

Devout Men

The verse at the head of this chapter records the burial of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, stoned to death in Jerusalem. It is a single sentence in the book of Acts, and it is one of the tenderest in the New Testament. "And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him." Luke does not name them. We do not know who they were, whether apostles or ordinary believers, or how they recovered the body. We know only that they loved him and grieved for him and buried him with honour, at some risk to themselves.

The men and women who carried Livingstone to the coast were not all Christians, though several of them were or would become so. They were, in the sense that matters here, devout: devoted to the man they had followed and to the duty they had taken on. Unlike the men who buried Stephen, many of them can be named, and they should be. Susi and Chuma led them. Jacob Wainwright, Carus Farrar and Matthew Wellington were among the young men from Nasik. Majwara was the boy at the door. Halima cooked for the company, as she had for Livingstone. Farijala prepared the body. There were dozens of others whose names are in the lists that Waller compiled and that later scholars have gathered, and some whose names are lost.

The inscription on Livingstone's grave in Westminster Abbey begins, "Brought by faithful hands over land and sea." The hands over land were theirs.

England

When the body reached Zanzibar, the British authorities paid off most of the men and sent them home. They were given their wages and a few gifts. Very few of them were taken to England for the funeral. Only Jacob Wainwright went with the body, on the ship that carried it to Southampton. Many people have since thought it a shameful thing that the men who had carried Livingstone a thousand miles were left at Zanzibar while British dignitaries carried him the last few hundred yards. It was.

The body reached Southampton in April 1874 and was taken by special train to London, where it lay at the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society. There it was examined by the surgeon Sir William Fergusson and others, in the presence of friends who had known Livingstone, among them his father-in-law, Robert Moffat. They found in the upper left arm the false joint left by the lion at Mabotsa thirty years before, and were satisfied that the body was his. The men who had carried it had never doubted it.

The funeral took place on 18 April 1874. Jacob Wainwright walked among the eight pallbearers, the only African among them, beside Stanley and old friends and companions of Livingstone's travels. The Abbey records that he threw a palm branch into the grave. A choirboy who was present is said to have remembered, years later, seeing Stanley restrain him at the graveside, overcome with grief.

Susi and Chuma came to Britain some weeks later, after the funeral, through the efforts of Livingstone's friends. They visited his family, met

many of those who had known him, and spent time with Horace Waller at Newstead Abbey, helping him to sort Livingstone's papers and telling him, day after day, the story of the last months and the long journey. Waller wrote it down, and it became the closing chapters of the *Last Journals*. Almost everything we know of Livingstone's death and of the journey to the coast comes from their memories.

What Became of Them

Chuma went back to Zanzibar and worked for the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, the mission whose first bishop had died at the Ruo in 1862, and later led caravans for other expeditions into the interior. He died of tuberculosis in Zanzibar in 1882, still a young man. Susi also returned to Zanzibar and worked for the same mission, as a trusted helper of its bishops on their journeys. In 1886, after years of instruction, he was baptised, and he took the name David, after his old master. He died in 1891. Jacob Wainwright returned to East Africa and worked with the Church Missionary Society; he died in 1892.

Their later lives were not famous. They were faithful. In that, they were more like the real Livingstone than the legend ever was.

A Grain of Wheat

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit."
— John 12:24, ASV

The Market Closed

On 5 June 1873, about a month after Livingstone's death at Chitambo's village, and long before anyone outside the interior knew of it, the Sultan of Zanzibar, Barghash bin Said, signed a treaty with Britain. It made the export of slaves by sea from his mainland territories illegal, and it closed the great public slave market of Zanzibar, through which tens of thousands of people from the interior had passed every year. The treaty was the work of many hands: a British government mission led by Sir Bartle Frere, the persistent pressure of the consul at Zanzibar, John Kirk, Livingstone's old colleague, and years of campaigning in Britain. The campaign had been fed, more than by anything else, by Livingstone's letters and journals, and especially by his account of the massacre at Nyangwe. He did not live to know of it.

The treaty did not end the slave trade in East Africa. The overland trade went on for years, and slavery itself continued on the island and the coast until the end of the century and beyond. But it was the beginning of the

end, and it came because people in Britain had been made to see what Livingstone had seen. All he could add in his solitude, he had written, was a prayer for blessing on anyone who would help heal the open sore. The prayer was being answered while he was dying.

In September 1873 the Universities' Mission to Central Africa bought the site of the old market, and on Christmas Day that year the foundation stone of a church was laid there. Christ Church Cathedral, Zanzibar, stands on the place where people were bought and sold. Tradition says that its altar stands where the whipping post once stood. Whether or not that is exact, the building is a sermon in stone, and it was built by the mission that Livingstone's Cambridge lecture had called into being.

The Missions

His death did what his life had not. The news of how he had died, and of how his men had carried him home, moved British Christians as nothing else could have done. Within a few years, missions were founded in the regions he had explored. In 1875 the Free Church of Scotland established a mission on Lake Nyasa, named Livingstonia, which under the leadership of Robert Laws became a great centre of education, training African teachers, ministers, doctors and craftsmen for half a century. In 1876 the Church of Scotland founded a mission in the Shire Highlands and called it Blantyre, after his birthplace; the town that grew up around it is now one of the principal cities of Malawi. The Universities' Mission returned to Lake Nyasa in the 1880s. The London Missionary Society sent missionaries to Lake Tanganyika. Others followed.

These missions had their own failures, and their own entanglement with what came after. But out of them grew churches that are now among the largest and most vigorous in Africa, led by African ministers and

bishops, worshipping in African languages, and sending out their own missionaries. It is worth saying again what this book has said several times: those churches were built mostly by African evangelists, teachers and catechists, men and women whose names are not in the history books, carrying the gospel to their own people in ways that no foreign missionary could. Livingstone had argued, in his first years at Kuruman, that this was how Africa would be evangelised. He was right. He did not live to see it, and it did not happen through him. It happened through the kind of people who carried him to the coast.

The Shadow of Empire

His death also did something he would not have wanted. In the 1880s the European powers divided Africa among themselves, in what came to be called the Scramble for Africa. Livingstone's name was used, over and over again, to justify British claims. In the Shire Highlands, the Scottish missionaries and their supporters lobbied the British government to take the region under its protection, to keep it from the Portuguese and to stop the slave raids. In 1891 Britain declared a protectorate over the region, later called Nyasaland. The country north of the Zambezi, where Livingstone had walked and died, was taken over by Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company and became Northern Rhodesia. The phrase "Christianity, commerce and civilisation" became a slogan of empire.

Colonial rule brought some of the things Livingstone had hoped for: the end of the slave trade, roads, schools, hospitals. It also brought much that he had opposed all his life: the taking of African land by European settlers and companies, forced labour, heavy taxes, racial discrimination, and the denial of self-government. In 1915, in Nyasaland, a Baptist minister named John Chilembwe, who had grown up in the world the missions

made and had been taught by missionaries, led an armed rising against the injustices of colonial rule and was killed. In the Congo basin, which Livingstone had thought was the Nile, Stanley's work for King Leopold opened the way for one of the worst atrocities of the colonial era.

It would be unjust to blame Livingstone for all of this. He did not want Africa conquered, and his ideal of African communities trading freely with Britain while governing themselves was different from what happened. But it would be dishonest to pretend that his vision had nothing to do with it. He called for Britain to come to Africa. He believed that British influence was a Christian influence. He did not see how easily that belief could be used by people who cared nothing for Christ. Christians who admire him should learn from that blindness. The gospel can be carried on the back of power, but power does not stay its servant for long.

When Zambia and Malawi became independent in 1964, they did something that surprised many observers. They kept his name. The town of Livingstone, near the Victoria Falls, kept it, and his statue still stands there. Blantyre kept its name. Many African Christians, then and now, have honoured him as a man who hated the slave trade, treated Africans as equals, and died among them. Others have seen him as a forerunner of colonial rule and asked why his memory should be kept. Both views have their reasons, and Africans have every right to make up their own minds about him. It is not for a British biographer, or for any outsider, to tell them which to hold.

The One Convert

And what of his missionary work, judged by the standard he would have used? He baptised one convert whom we know of, and suspended him from communion within months. By any ordinary measure, his career as a

missionary was a failure, and he knew it. In his own lifetime he was criticised for abandoning the missionary calling for exploration, and the criticism had force.

But Sechele did not fall away. He went on reading his Bible, holding worship, and teaching his people, and the Bakwena became a Christian people in large part because of him. That was Livingstone's doing as well as Sechele's. And the missions founded after Livingstone's death in the lands he had explored brought the gospel to millions. Was that his work? Not directly. He did not found them, staff them or lead them. But they would not have existed without him. He was, in his own words at Cambridge, a man who began a work and left it for others to carry out.

The verse at the head of this chapter is Jesus's saying about the grain of wheat: unless it falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Jesus spoke it of his own death, and he went on to apply it to all who follow him: "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25, ASV). Livingstone's life did not bear much visible fruit while he lived. It bore fruit after he died, in the missions, in the closing of the slave market, in the churches of Malawi and Zambia and Tanzania, and in the lives of people like Chuma and Susi, who learned the faith in his company and kept it. His heart, literally, was buried in African earth. It is not too much to say that it bore fruit there.

The Man Himself

This book has tried to tell the truth about him, and the truth is mixed. He was brave, persevering, honest about money, generous to the poor, and devoted to the cause of African freedom. He kept his word to the men who carried him across Africa. He respected Africans more than most

Europeans of his day, and he gave his life to a continent he loved. He prayed every day, read his Bible through again and again, and dedicated himself to Christ at sixty as he had at twenty.

He was also proud, stubborn and often unjust. He could not work with equals, and he blamed others for his own mistakes. He neglected his wife and children for his work, and they paid a terrible price. He told his own story in ways that flattered him, and he was sometimes careless with the truth about his failures. He believed too easily that his own plans and God's were the same. And he set going a vision of Africa's future that others turned to purposes he would have hated.

The Victorian legend made him a saint. Some modern accounts have made him a villain, or a fool. He was neither. He was a sinner who had been forgiven and who knew it, a servant of Christ who often mistook his own will for his Master's, and a man who went on, through failure after failure, because he believed that he had been sent. "We are unprofitable servants," Jesus taught his disciples to say; "we have done that which it was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10, ASV). Livingstone would not have quarrelled with that verdict. In the best known of his last prayers, he asked only to be accepted, and to finish his task. God accepts the unprofitable. The task was finished by others, as it always is.

Appendix a: Lessons from the Life of David Livingstone

> *"Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith."*
> *— Hebrews 13:7, ASV*

The lessons below gather the themes of this book so that readers can return to them. Livingstone is a harder subject for this kind of list than most of the people in this series, because some of his lessons are warnings. The letter to the Hebrews tells us to consider the outcome of the lives of those who went before us and to imitate their faith, not every choice they made. Each lesson therefore rests on Scripture, not on his example alone.

1. God Uses Working People

A boy who went into a cotton mill at ten, and studied Latin at night with the books snatched from his hands at midnight, became a doctor, a minister and one of the best-known Christians of his century. "God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong" (1 Corinthians 1:27, ASV).

2. Hard Work Is a Form of Service

Livingstone believed that the mill had trained him for Africa. Work done with all our strength can be offered to God, even work we did not choose. "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23, ASV).

3. Faith and the Study of Creation Belong Together

He came to faith when he saw that the God of the Bible and the God of the rocks and stars were the same. He worshipped as he measured. "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1, ASV).

4. Weakness Does Not Disqualify

He forgot his sermon at Ongar and was nearly rejected by his Society. God did not make him eloquent; he gave him other gifts. "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak" (Exodus 4:12, ASV).

5. Learn the People's Language and Ways

He lived for six months among the Bakwena without hearing English, so as to learn Setswana and the life of the people. "I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22, ASV).

6. Honour Those Who Save Your Life

Mebalwe ran at the lion with a gun that would not fire. Livingstone's life, again and again, was saved by Africans whom his books barely named.

"Salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life laid down their own necks" (Romans 16:3-4, ASV).

7. Hear the Hard Questions

Sechele asked why the gospel had come so late to his ancestors. Livingstone had no easy answer, and he wrote the question down. "Being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15, ASV).

8. Faith Cannot Be Forced

He refused Sechele's offer to beat the Bakwena into belief, and he was right. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6, ASV).

9. Count the Cost Others Will Pay

His family paid for his journeys with poverty, loneliness and separation. A calling that destroys those closest to us needs to be examined, not only admired. "But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, ASV).

10. Keep Your Word

He would not leave twenty-seven men on the coast at Luanda, though a ship was waiting to take him home. "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not" (Psalm 15:4, ASV).

11. Rest on the Promise of Christ

On the night of 14 January 1856 he found peace not in a change of circumstances but in a word, which he called the word of a gentleman of the strictest honour. "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20, ASV).

12. Service Is a Privilege

"I never made a sacrifice," he told Cambridge. Those words are true of what Christ gives, though we must remember those who paid the price for us. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward" (Romans 8:18, ASV).

13. Beware of Borrowed Power

His call for "commerce and Christianity" was taken up by those who wanted Africa for themselves. The gospel must not be confused with the interests of any nation. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24, ASV).

14. Hold Your Plans Loosely

He built a vision on a river he had not seen, and Kebrabasa blocked it. Plans are good; certainty about them is dangerous. "A man's heart deviseth his way; But Jehovah directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9, ASV).

15. Learn to Share Command

He could lead Africans across a continent and could not lead six Europeans up a river. Humility in leadership is not weakness. “In lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself” (Philippians 2:3, ASV).

16. Admit When You Are Wrong

Livingstone found it very hard to say that he had been mistaken about Kebrabasa, about Baines, about the Helmores, about Kirk. Confession is a door to freedom. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9, ASV).

17. Speak for the Captive

He wrote down what he saw on the slave roads, plainly and without exaggeration, and his writing helped close the Zanzibar market. “Open thy mouth for the dumb, In the cause of all such as are left desolate” (Proverbs 31:8, ASV).

18. Grief Is Not Unbelief

At Shupanga he wept for Mary and felt, for the first time, willing to die. God is near in such grief. “Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart” (Psalm 34:18, ASV).

19. Be Present to Your Children

Robert died in a prison camp in America under a false name, having hardly known his father. Children need more than letters. “And, ye fathers,

provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, ASV).

20. Lament Is a Form of Prayer

At Nyangwe he could only cry out for God's kingdom to come. The Bible gives us words for such moments. "O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?" (Habakkuk 1:2, ASV).

21. Tell the Whole Truth

His field diary shows that he told the story of Nyangwe in a way that put more distance between himself and the traders than there had been. Christians, of all people, can afford to tell the whole truth. "Putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor" (Ephesians 4:25, ASV).

22. God Remembers the Unnamed

Susi, Chuma, Jacob Wainwright, Majwara, Halima and the others carried him a thousand miles, and most of them were sent home before the funeral. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name" (Hebrews 6:10, ASV).

23. Fruit May Come After We Are Gone

One known convert in his lifetime; churches of millions after his death. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John 12:24, ASV).

24. We Are Unprofitable Servants

At sixty, in the swamps, he gave himself to Christ again and asked only to finish his task. The task was finished by others. “We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10, ASV).

Appendix B: Chapter-by-Chapter Study and Reflection Guide

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves."
— James 1:22, ASV

This guide is for personal reflection, small groups, or a reading course of about twenty-four weeks. Its purpose is not to make David Livingstone an object of admiration, but to let his life hold up a mirror in which readers can examine their own discipleship under Scripture. Groups may find it helpful to begin each session with the chapter's opening verse and to end with prayer. Many chapters raise hard questions about family, leadership, power and mission. They are meant to be discussed honestly, not settled quickly.

Introduction - The Saint, the Explorer, and the Record

Central idea

The real Livingstone, as his own writings and the record show him, is more complicated and more instructive than the Victorian legend.

Scriptures to revisit

2 Corinthians 4:7; John 8:32.

Reflection

1. Why do Christians need their heroes to be flawless? 2. What do we lose when we polish a life?

Chapter 1 - Shuttle Row

Central idea

A one-room home in a mill village gave him a Highland pride in honesty, a father's stern faith and a mother's cheerful thrift.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 16:5-6; Proverbs 22:6.

Reflection

1. What did you inherit from your family that helps you serve God? 2. What did you inherit that you have had to unlearn?

Chapter 2 - The Piecer

Central idea

Ten years in the mill formed endurance and a working man's sympathy, and also a habit of judging others by work done.

Scriptures to revisit

Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:23.

Reflection

1. How do you regard work you did not choose? 2. Where might your strengths make you hard on others?

Chapter 3 - Colour Blindness Cured

Central idea

His faith became his own when he saw that the God of Scripture and the God of creation are one.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 19; Romans 1:20.

Reflection

1. Have you ever felt that faith and learning were at war? 2. What would it mean for you to see the world “in colour”?

Chapter 4 - Slow of Speech

Central idea

A poor preacher, nearly rejected by his Society, was sent anyway, and given other gifts.

Scriptures to revisit

Exodus 4:10-13; Psalm 121.

Reflection

1. What weakness do you think disqualifies you? 2. How has God used you in spite of it?

Chapter 5 - Another Man's Foundation

Central idea

He longed to go where Christ was not named, and saw early that Africa would be evangelised by Africans.

Scriptures to revisit

Romans 15:20-24; 2 Timothy 2:2.

Reflection

1. Is pioneering always better than building on others' work? 2. Whom are you training to carry the gospel further than you can?

Chapter 6 - The Lion at Mabotsa

Central idea

He was saved from the lion by Mebalwe's courage, and drew from the attack a lesson about God's mercy.

Scriptures to revisit

2 Timothy 4:17; Psalm 23:4.

Reflection

1. Whose courage has protected you without much credit? 2. What do you make of his idea of a merciful provision?

Chapter 7 - Sechele

Central idea

A chief who read Isaiah asked hard questions, paid a great price for baptism, fell, and became the evangelist of his people.

Scriptures to revisit

Acts 8:26-39; 1 Peter 3:15.

Reflection

1. How would you answer Sechele's question about his ancestors? 2. What did you make of the demand that he send away his wives?

Chapter 8 - Across the Thirstland

Central idea

Lake Ngami and the Zambezi opened a vision of the interior, at a heavy cost to his wife and children.

Scriptures to revisit

Isaiah 35; 1 Timothy 5:8.

Reflection

1. When does a calling justify risk to others? 2. What did you hear in Mary's silence?

Chapter 9 - Kolobeng Plundered

Central idea

The Boer raid ended his station, while Mary and the children wandered through English lodgings.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 46; Luke 18:29-30.

Reflection

1. Who in your church is carrying a hidden cost for someone else's ministry? 2. Can a resolution to place no value on anything go wrong?

Chapter 10 - Twenty-Seven Men

Central idea

At Luanda he refused a passage home rather than break his promise to the men who had brought him to the sea.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 15; Matthew 5:37.

Reflection

1. What promise is it costing you to keep? 2. Why do you think he kept faith with these men more easily than with his family?

Chapter 11 - The Word of a Gentleman

Central idea

On the night of 14 January 1856 he found peace in the promise of Christ, not in any change of circumstances.

Scriptures to revisit

Matthew 28:18-20; Psalm 56:3-4.

Reflection

1. Which promise of Christ do you most need to take as the word of a gentleman? 2. What did you notice about the renaming of Mosi-oa-Tunya?

Chapter 12 - "I Never Made a Sacrifice"

Central idea

Fame, the Cambridge appeal, and the vision of commerce and Christianity together.

Scriptures to revisit

Romans 8:18; Matthew 6:24.

Reflection

1. Is it true that serving Christ is never a sacrifice? 2. Where might the gospel in your culture be confused with commerce or national interest?

Chapter 13 - Kebrabasa

Central idea

A plan built on an unseen river collapsed, and he could not admit it, nor lead his colleagues well.

Scriptures to revisit

Proverbs 16:9; Philippians 2:3-4.

Reflection

1. When has perseverance turned into stubbornness in your life? 2. How do you respond when someone under you disagrees?

Chapter 14 - Graves at Linyanti

Central idea

The Helmore and Price families died at Linyanti, and he defended himself rather than grieving his share.

Scriptures to revisit

James 4:13-15; Hebrews 6:10.

Reflection

1. How should Christians speak of missionary deaths? 2. Whose names are missing from the stories your church tells?

Chapter 15 - Magomero

Central idea

Captives were freed at Mbame's village, and the mission was drawn into fighting and lost its bishop.

Scriptures to revisit

Isaiah 61:1-4; Luke 4:16-21.

Reflection

1. Is it ever right for Christians to use force to free the oppressed? 2. What did the freeing of Chuma mean in the long run?

Chapter 16 - Shupanga

Central idea

Mary died beside him at Shupanga, and he saw, too late, what their marriage had cost her.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 34:18; 2 Corinthians 6:10.

Reflection

1. What does contrition look like after a loss we helped to cause? 2. How would you tell Mary Livingstone's story?

Chapter 17 - Recalled

Central idea

The Shire valley was devastated, the expedition recalled, and his son Robert lost.

Scriptures to revisit

2 Corinthians 4:8-9; Ephesians 6:4.

Reflection

1. How do you keep faith when your work appears to have done harm? 2. What would Robert have needed from his father?

Chapter 18 - The Sentence of Death

Central idea

Without medicines, he went on, and became dependent on the slave traders he had come to expose.

Scriptures to revisit

Hebrews 11:8-10; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9.

Reflection

1. Have you ever had to depend on people whose ways you oppose? 2. What does it mean to go out "not knowing whither"?

Chapter 19 - Nyangwe

Central idea

He witnessed a massacre, wrote it down, prayed, and helped move a nation; his first notes show a more tangled story.

Scriptures to revisit

Habakkuk 1:2-4; 2:4, 14; Ephesians 4:25.

Reflection

1. What is the place of lament in your prayers? 2. Why do we tell stories that put distance between ourselves and evil?

Chapter 20 - "I Presume"

Central idea

Stanley's arrival brought him new life, and Livingstone refused to go home; he dedicated himself again on his birthday.

Scriptures to revisit

Proverbs 25:25; Romans 12:1.

Reflection

1. Who has brought you “good news from a far country”? 2. What would it mean for you to dedicate your “whole self” again today?

Chapter 21 - Chitambo’s Village

Central idea

He died in a grass hut, probably kneeling, among people who had stayed with him for years.

Scriptures to revisit

Psalm 116:15; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Reflection

1. How do you hold a cherished story that cannot be proved? 2. Who will be with you at the end?

Chapter 22 - Faithful Hands

Central idea

Susi, Chuma, Jacob Wainwright and their companions chose to carry his body a thousand miles to the coast.

Scriptures to revisit

Acts 8:2; Ruth 1:16-17.

Reflection

1. What did their choice reveal about them, and about him? 2. How can churches honour the unnamed who carry the work?

Chapter 23 - A Grain of Wheat

Central idea

His life bore fruit after his death, in the closing of the slave market and the churches of Central Africa, and in the shadow of empire.

Scriptures to revisit

John 12:24-26; Luke 17:10.

Reflection

1. What in his life would you imitate, and what would you avoid? 2. What might God do with your life after you are gone?

Appendix C: Chronology of the Life and Times of David Livingstone

> *"So teach us to number our days, That we may get us a heart of wisdom."*
> *— Psalm 90:12, ASV*

The dates below are meant as orientation. Where the sources disagree, the disagreement is noted. Livingstone's own dating became unreliable in his last years, and several dates from that period are uncertain.

1813 - Birth

David Livingstone is born on 19 March at Blantyre Works, Lanarkshire, the second of seven children of Neil Livingstone, tea dealer, and Agnes Hunter.

1823 - The Mill

At ten he goes to work as a piecer in the Blantyre cotton mill, and attends the evening school.

c. 1832 - Spinner and Convert

Promoted to spinner. About this time he comes to a personal faith, helped by Thomas Dick's *Philosophy of a Future State*.

c. 1834 - China

Karl Gützlaff's appeal for medical missionaries to China moves him to train as a doctor.

1836-1838 - Glasgow

Studies medicine and chemistry at the Andersonian University, Greek at Glasgow University, and theology under Ralph Wardlaw, working in the mill in summer.

1838-1839 - Ongar

Accepted on probation by the London Missionary Society; studies under Richard Cecil at Chipping Ongar; probation extended; accepted in 1839.

1839-1840 - London

The Opium War closes China. Meets Robert Moffat and turns to southern Africa.

1840 - Ordination and Departure

Qualifies as a Licentiate of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow in November; ordained on 20 November at Albion Chapel, London; sails on the *George* on 8 December.

1841 - Kuruman

Lands at Simon's Bay in March; reaches Kuruman on 31 July. First journey north with Rogers Edwards.

1842-1843 - The North

Travels among the Bakwena and Bamangwato; lives for about six months among the Bakwena to learn Setswana. Meets Sechele. Founds Mabotsa with Edwards in 1843.

1844 - The Lion

Mauled by a lion at Mabotsa in February; saved by the intervention of Mebalwe. Engaged to Mary Moffat.

1845 - Marriage

Marries Mary Moffat at Kuruman on 9 January. Quarrel with Edwards; moves to Chonuane, Sechele's town.

1846-1851 - Children

Robert born 1846 (Mabotsa), Agnes 1847 (Chonuane), Thomas 1849 (Kolobeng), Elizabeth 1850 (died at about six weeks), William Oswell 1851 (on the Zouga River).

1847 - Kolobeng

The Bakwena move to Kolobeng. Years of drought begin.

1848 - Sechele's Baptism

Sechele is baptised on 1 October after sending away all but one of his wives. Early in 1849 he is suspended from communion. He is the only African Livingstone is known to have baptised.

1849 - Lake Ngami

With W. C. Oswell and Mungo Murray, guided by Sechele's man Ramotobi, reaches Lake Ngami on 1 August.

1850-1851 - With the Family

Second journey to Ngami with Mary and the children (1850). In 1851 reaches the Makololo; Sebetwane dies on 7 July; reaches the upper Zambezi at Sesheke on 4 August. Sees the slave trade for the first time.

1852 - Separation and Dimawe

Mary and the children sail for Britain from the Cape in April. In late August a Boer commando attacks the Bakwena at Dimawe, and Livingstone's house at Kolobeng is plundered.

1853 - Linyanti

Sechele travels to Cape Town to appeal for help. Livingstone reaches Linyanti in May; leaves for the west coast with twenty-seven men on 11 November.

1854 - Luanda

Reaches Luanda on 31 May. Declines a passage home; HMS *Forerunner*, carrying his papers, sinks off Madeira. Leaves Luanda on 20 September.

1855 - Victoria Falls

Back at Linyanti in September. Leaves for the east in November; sees Mosi-oa-Tunya, which he names the Victoria Falls, in mid-November.

1856 - Across Africa

The night of 14 January at the Luangwa confluence. Father dies in February. Reaches Tete on 2 March and Quelimane on 20 May. Sekwebu drowns at Mauritius. Reaches England on 9 December.

1857 - Fame

Resigns from the London Missionary Society. *Missionary Travels* published in November. Speaks in the Senate House, Cambridge, on 4 December.

1858 - The Zambezi Expedition

Sails from Liverpool on 10 March as consul and leader of a government expedition. Mary stays at the Cape and Kuruman; Anna Mary is born at Kuruman on 16 November. Kebrabasa rapids found impassable in November.

1859 - Shire and Nyasa

Explores the Shire River; Lake Shirwa (April); Lake Nyasa (September). Thornton and Baines dismissed.

1860 - Linyanti Again

Helmore and Price families stricken at Linyanti (February to April). Livingstone takes the Makololo home, reaching Sesheke in August.

1861 - The Universities' Mission

Bishop Mackenzie and the mission arrive. The Rovuma is tried and found too shallow. Captives freed at Mbame's village in July, Chuma among them by the usual account; mission settles at Magomero.

1862 - Shupanga

Mackenzie dies on 31 January. Mary arrives at the end of January and dies at Shupanga on 27 April. The *Lady Nyassa* is launched.

1862-1863 - Famine and Recall

Drought and slave raids devastate the Shire valley. Kirk and Charles Livingstone go home in May 1863; the recall reaches Livingstone in July.

1864 - Bombay and Home

Sails the *Lady Nyassa* from Zanzibar to Bombay (April to June). Reaches London in July. His son Robert, serving in the Union army as Rupert Vincent, dies at Salisbury prison, North Carolina, in December.

1865 - Last Departure

Writes the *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi* at Newstead Abbey. His mother dies in June. Leaves Britain for the last time in August.

1866 - The Last Journey Begins

Reaches Zanzibar in January; lands near the Rovuma in March. Wikatani stays with his people near Lake Nyasa (August). Musa and the Johanna men desert and report his death.

1867 - Without Medicines

Medicine chest stolen on 20 January. Reaches Lake Tanganyika (April) and Lake Mweru (November). E. D. Young's search party disproves Musa's story.

1868 - Bangweulu

Reaches Lake Bangweulu in July.

1869 - Ujiji and Manyema

Reaches Ujiji, gravely ill, on 14 March; finds his stores plundered. Goes west into Manyema.

1870 - Bambarre

Laid up for months with ulcerated feet; reads the Bible through four times while in Manyema.

1871 - Nyangwe and Stanley

Reaches Nyangwe on the Lualaba in March. Witnesses the massacre on 15 July. Returns to Ujiji in late October. Meets H. M. Stanley at Ujiji (10

November by Stanley's book; 3 November in other Stanley texts; Livingstone's own dating points to late October).

1872 - Unyanyembe

With Stanley explores the north of Lake Tanganyika (late 1871) and travels to Unyanyembe (February). Stanley leaves on 14 March. Birthday dedication on 19 March. Porters arrive in August, with Jacob Wainwright and others from Nasik. Leaves Unyanyembe on 25 August.

1873 - Death

Wades the Bangweulu swamps (January to April). Last journal entry on 27 April. Dies at Chitambo's village, Ilala, probably on 1 May (his companions carved 4 May on the tree). His heart is buried under a mpundu tree. The Zanzibar slave market is closed by treaty on 5 June. His companions meet Cameron near Unyanyembe in October.

1874 - Westminster Abbey

The body reaches Bagamoyo in February. Buried in Westminster Abbey on 18 April; Jacob Wainwright among the pallbearers. Susi and Chuma come to England and help Horace Waller. *The Last Journals* published.

1875-1876 - The Missions

Livingstonia (Free Church of Scotland) founded on Lake Nyasa (1875); Blantyre Mission (Church of Scotland) founded in the Shire Highlands (1876).

1880 - Blaikie

W. G. Blaikie publishes *The Personal Life of David Livingstone*.

1882-1892 - The Companions

Chuma dies at Zanzibar (1882). Susi is baptised David (1886) and dies (1891). Sechele dies (1892). Jacob Wainwright dies (1892).

1891 - Protectorate

Britain declares a protectorate over the Shire Highlands and Lake Nyasa region, later Nyasaland.

1964 - Independence

Malawi and Zambia become independent. Both keep many of the places named in his memory.

Appendix D: Notes on Sources and Method

"it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order ... that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed."
— Luke 1:3-4, ASV

This appendix explains where the story told in this book comes from, how the sources were weighed, and which popular claims have been corrected. It is written for readers who want to check the story for themselves, and for anyone who will retell it.

Livingstone's Own Books

Three books by Livingstone, all now in the public domain, are the backbone of this biography. *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: John Murray, 1857) covers his life to 1856, and is the source of his account of his childhood, his conversion, the lion at Mabotsa, Sechele, the journeys to Lake Ngami, Luanda and the east coast, and the Victoria Falls. The *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries* (1865), written with his brother Charles, covers 1858 to 1864, including the release of the captives at Mbame's and the famine in the Shire valley. *The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death*, edited by Horace Waller (two volumes, 1874), covers the last

journey and includes the narrative of his death and of the journey to the coast as Susi and Chuma gave it to Waller.

Each of these was written or edited for publication, and each has its silences. *Missionary Travels* says little about his quarrels and less about his family's hardships. The *Narrative* passes lightly over the conflicts within the expedition. The *Last Journals* passed through Waller's reverent hands, and comparison with Livingstone's surviving field diaries shows that the published text was sometimes smoothed. This book quotes all three freely, because they let Livingstone speak, and it reads them with those limits in mind.

Other Early Sources

W. G. Blaikie, *The Personal Life of David Livingstone* (1880), written with the family's cooperation, printed many private letters and journal entries not otherwise available in his time. It is the source here for the story of the forgotten sermon at Ongar, the last morning at Blantyre in 1840, Moffat's recollection of the smoke of a thousand villages, the journal entry of 14 January 1856, the resolution to place no value on anything, and his grief at Mary's death. Blaikie was protective of his subject and passed quickly over the hardest matters.

H. M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone* (1872), is the only full outside account of Livingstone in his last years, and the source of the Ujiji greeting and of Stanley's portrait of his faith. Stanley wrote for a mass readership and had every reason to make the story vivid; his book should be read alongside the doubts about the date and wording discussed below.

Modern Scholarship

This book has drawn, for facts and interpretation, on modern scholarship that remains in copyright and has not been quoted. The most important works are Tim Jeal's biography, first published in 1973 and revised in 2013, which first set out in detail the failures, quarrels and family costs of Livingstone's career; Andrew Ross's *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire* (2002), which gives careful attention to his missionary convictions and to his African context; and the work of the Livingstone Online project, which has published his manuscripts and, through spectral imaging, recovered his 1871 field diary. Biographies of Mary Livingstone, studies of Sechele and the Bakwena by historians of Botswana, and work on Chuma, Susi and Jacob Wainwright have also informed the account. Facts about the African companions' later lives come from such studies and from records of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, and are given with that caution.

African Voices

African voices in this story are fewer than they should be, because the written record was mostly kept by Europeans. Some survive: Sechele's statements made at Cape Town in 1853; the testimony of Susi, Chuma and the boy Majwara, given to Waller and to British officials at Zanzibar; the diary of Jacob Wainwright; and oral traditions among the Bakwena and in the Shire valley. This book has tried to give the African people of the story their own place, and to name them where the record allows.

Corrections to the Popular Story

One convert. It is often said that Livingstone made only one convert. The record supports the statement that Sechele is the only African he is known

to have baptised. It does not follow that his work bore no fruit: Sechele went on to lead his people in the faith, and Livingstone was one of many missionaries working among the Batswana.

Sechele's baptism. Sechele was baptised on 1 October 1848, not in 1849 as some popular accounts have it. His suspension from communion followed early in 1849.

The lion. Livingstone's words about the stupor he felt in the lion's jaws are widely quoted with small variations, notably whether the mouse felt the first "shake" or the first "grip" of the cat. This book has quoted the passage only where the wording is secure and paraphrased the rest. The man who saved his life, Mebalwe, is often left out of the story; he belongs in it.

The smoke of a thousand villages. The phrase comes from Robert Moffat's later recollection of a private conversation, as reported by Blaikie. The popular story of a boy hidden in an organ loft hearing it in a sermon has no basis.

"Anywhere, provided it be forward." The saying carved on memorials is a tidied version of words in one of his letters to the Missionary Society, in which he spoke of holding himself in readiness to go anywhere, provided it be forward.

Discoveries. Lake Ngami, the Victoria Falls, Lake Nyasa and the other places Livingstone is said to have discovered were known to the African peoples who lived there, and some had been visited by Portuguese or Arab-Swahili traders. He was the first European to report them to the wider world. Afro-Portuguese traders had crossed the continent before him.

The Ujiji meeting. The words "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" come from Stanley alone; the relevant pages of his diary are missing, and his own texts differ in detail. The date is uncertain: 10 November 1871 in Stanley's book, 3 November in other versions, and late October by Livingstone's own disordered reckoning.

"The open sore of the world." The inscription in Westminster Abbey presents these words as among the last he wrote. He wrote them at Unyanyembe in 1872, about a year before his death.

His death. The date is given as 1 May 1873 by Waller and on his grave, but his companions carved 4 May on the tree at Chitambo's village. The account of his being found kneeling in prayer comes from the testimony of Majwara, Susi, Chuma and Matthew Wellington, through Waller. It is cherished testimony, consistent with his habits, and not independently verifiable.

The distance to the coast. Some popular accounts say that his body was carried fourteen hundred miles. The usual estimate is about a thousand miles, over some nine months from his death to the coast.

Mary Livingstone. Claims that Mary Livingstone drank heavily in her years in Britain rest on the reports of contemporaries and have been taken seriously by modern biographers, but they cannot be proved and are not stated here as fact.

Nyangwe. The account of the massacre in the *Last Journals* is substantially true, but the recovered field diary shows that Livingstone's situation before it was more entangled with the traders, and with violence by his own followers, than the published version suggests.

Quotations

Words in quotation marks are given only where their exact wording could be confirmed. Some of Livingstone's best-known words, and some of Stanley's and Sechele's, are given in close paraphrase, clearly attributed, because their exact wording could not be checked against the original editions; among them are the journal entry of 14 January 1856, his grief at Mary's death, his resolution to place no value on anything, his words on

losing his medicine chest and at Nyangwe, Sechele's question about his ancestors, and most of the exchange at Ujiji. "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" is quoted as Stanley's own account. Readers who wish to quote Livingstone in print should check the wording against a facsimile of the first editions. Several sayings popularly attributed to him, such as "Fear God and work hard," have not been used as his.

Language

Livingstone and his contemporaries used words for Africans and African customs that are offensive today. This book quotes such language only where it is needed to show what he thought, and marks it when it does. It uses modern spellings of place names (Zambezi, Luanda, Quelimane, Tete, Lake Nyasa) except in quotations and titles.

Scripture

All Scripture quotations at the head of the chapters and in the text are from the American Standard Version of 1901, in the public domain. Where Livingstone himself quotes the Bible, he quotes the King James Version, and his words are given as he wrote them.

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