

O Where Shall Rest Be Found*James Montgomery (1771–1854)*

O where shall rest be found,
 Rest for the weary soul?
 'Twere vain the ocean-depths to sound,
 Or pierce to either pole;
 The world can never give
 The bliss for which we sigh;
 'Tis not the whole of life to live;
 Nor all of death to die.

Beyond this vale of tears,
 There is a life above,
 Unmeasured by the flight of years;
 And all that life is love;—
 There is a death, whose pang
 Outlasts the fleeting breath;
 O what eternal horrors hang
 Around “the second death!”

Lord God of truth and grace,
 Teach us that death to shun,
 Lest we be banish'd from Thy face,
 And evermore undone:
 Here would we end our quest;
 Alone are found in Thee,
 The life of perfect love,—the rest
 Of immortality.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***Missionary Martyrs: Are We Paying Too High a Price to Evangelize the World? Part Two***Jeff Straub*

Last week I wrote of the deaths of Charles Trumann Wesco and John Allen Chau, two men whose lives ended in recent days in the service of God. Wesco was a newly-arrived missionary in Cameroon when he was shot in the head in Bamenda, while Chau was killed when he tried to contact the North Sentinelese islanders, one of the last primitive tribes in the world.

Especially in the case of Chau, the internet has been ablaze with essays, blogs, and opinions, some good but many critical, with a few being especially harsh and vulgar. I am glad that I withheld judgment until after listening to the interview between Mark Galli and Mary Ho of All Nations International, the agency with which Chau was affiliated. Many have accused Chau of being a reckless adventurer who showed little regard for the welfare of the islanders and had little, if any, training or preparation for his mission. Such does not seem to be the case as Ho states that Chau had well-prepared himself for the dangerous task and knew in advance that he would likely receive a very hostile reception.

Last week's essay commended these men as models of Christian dedication in gospel advance. I suggested that two additional essays would be forthcoming addressing other aspects of the debate surrounding what these men did and how they died. This week I want to focus on the notion of doing missions in a hostile environment. One comment came to me that Wesco failed to heed a governmental warning that the part of Cameroon into which he planned to go was potentially dangerous. He chided Wesco for taking his family into harm's way. As for Chau, he did the same thing, but he went solo, deliberately so, apparently. Chau knew that, historically, the islanders had repelled all comers, minimally with arrows and some with death. Moreover, while Wesco merely ignored (if he actually did) governmental warnings, Chau actually broke Indian law by going to North Sentinel Island. In these aspects, the stories of Wesco and Chau are significantly different. I wish to treat these two ideas—ignoring warnings and breaking the law—in two separate essays regarding gospel advance.

At minimum, both Wesco and Chau seemed to ignore warnings of danger of laboring or attempting to labor in hostile parts of the world. In Wesco's



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

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case, he took nine other people into danger by moving his entire family to Cameroon. Does his action show a cavalier disregard to prudence? Does it show a failure on the part of his mission agency to reign in his lofty desire? Shouldn't someone have anticipated something like this happening? Shouldn't he have been forbidden to go? In Chau's case, his diary seems to reveal that he had a very good idea of what he could expect from the North Sentinelese people. What a waste! Or worse, what hubris! Were these deaths just foolish and reckless? Since I didn't know either brother personally, I would like to step back and address the concept of risky gospel advance rather than trying to impugn or vindicate either man. Only God knew their hearts and what ultimately motivated them. I am willing to leave the discernment of motive to Him.

Gospel advance has always come with a measure of risk—*always*. Many times the risks have been significant. One of the real ironies of these stories of Wesco and Chau are the chronological juxtaposing of their deaths with the ninth anniversary of a restoration ceremony that took place on Erromango (Vanuatu) in 2009. In 1839, London Missionary Society member John Williams and his colleague James Harris landed in Dillons Bay (today renamed Williams Bay), Erromango. Before the ship was out of sight, returning to sea, both had been killed within eyesight of the ship. It was a sad end to the lives of two men whose burden it was to share the gospel among those who had never heard. Was their sacrifice worthwhile? The long-term consequence, however, is that others stepped up to assume the burden these men laid down and brought the good news of the death of Christ to that part of the world. Twenty years later, George Gordon and his wife also died on Erromango. James, George's brother, attempted to carry forward his brother's ministry and he was also killed. Erromango was not reached without significant sacrifice. Missionaries died and others arose to take their places. Could the gospel have come another way? This doesn't seem likely if one believes in the sovereign hand of God. Williams and Harris, the Gordons, Wesco and Chau, and a host of others have been called upon by God to make the ultimate sacrifice for gospel advance.

Certainly, one of the principal results flowing from the deaths of these two recent missionaries is the conversation that has been started yet again about the cost of missions. The need for committed missionaries is still great and, although there may be few places left on earth like North Sentinel Island, there are many other locales like Cameroon where Christian ministry takes place under duress, if not in outright hostility. Whether it's Cameroon, India, or the Ukraine, where I ministered about one year ago and met brothers who had fled from the Russian-controlled part of the country where believers were experiencing heavy persecution, it is often not possible to avoid all areas of hostility when it comes to Christian ministry.

With hostility comes the possibility of death. It is true that some believers down through church history sought martyrdom and lived dangerously

close to the edge hoping to attain the martyr's crown, but many, many good saints have been called to glory simply by being faithful witnesses to the truth of Jesus Christ where they lived and served. Some of my students at Central Africa Baptist College of Kitwe, Zambia, are from the South Sudan where political unrest threatened believers. Granted we are talking about hostility in one's home country versus hostility in a missionary's prospective field of labor, but why should missionaries necessarily avoid a place of potential hostility? In Wesco's case, there may have been a government warning which was meant to alert visitors to *possible* threats, but missionaries are sometimes led to areas of uncertainty because this is the only way to bring about gospel advance. Waiting for things to settle in a given location may not be an option. The lost need someone to bring them good news. Thank God for those who are willing to take the message of Jesus Christ to places where things may be dangerous. Lord, give us dedicated servants for gospel advance!



This essay is by Jeff Straub, Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
