

Letter to [John Arundel], 5 September 1837

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Blantyre Works 5th Sept. 1837.

Dear Sir.

Being very desirous, for some years past, to devote my life to the cause of missions, and thinking, at one time, that my education for that purpose might be prosecuted throughout by the fruits of my own industry; after a trial of one season at some medical, and other classes I find that this is nearly impracticable: Observing frequent appeals for missionaries, in the Evangelical Magazine, and talking over the matter to my pastor the Rev.nd M.^r Moir of the Independant church, Hamilton, I was encouraged to offer myself to your society: and, subsequently, I received information to give an account of my christian experience, Doctrinal views, and Christian motives, which I now endeavour shortly to give.

Through the merciful providence of a gracious god, it was my privelege to enjoy the instructions, example, and prayers, of pious parents, who still walk before god in the land of the living. These, however, had no effect on my desperately wicked heart, only serving to restrain me, in some measure, from outward immorality; When about my twelfth year, I was visited with great distress of mind on account of my sinfulness, and anxious desire to possess the peace of mind, and happiness, which I felt convinced, the true christian alone enjoyed, This I could not attain, because of my looking continually within for an effect, which I thought must be produced there, by the spirit of god, ere I could be entitled to take the benefit of the gospel, and this delusion being strengthened by some preaching, which I then heard, my only course appeared to be, just to wait the good pleasure [of] god. Thus, continuing to look for another ground of hope, than the finished work of christ, I found neither peace nor [0002]

happiness, which caused me, (never having revealed the state of my mind to any one) often to bewail my sad state with tears in secret. The anxiety of my mind after some time abated but a perpetual uneasiness, a soreness of heart still remained, which no amusements ~~nor~~ nor pursuit could assuage, Until in my nineteenth year, it pleased god in mercifull kindness & compassion to shew me my folly & error, by means of a work, entitled, "The Philosophy of a future state," previous to reading which though sceptical thoughts were not actually entertained, concerning the reality of the existence of such a state yet it had no influence whatever on [^][my] conduct, If I bestowed on them a thought Heaven had no attractions for me, and Hell was never an object of alarm. But now full full conviction of their relation to me, filled my mind, and I likewise felt that the atoning work of Christ was the only ground on which I could hope to find peace to my soul here, and enjoy the prospects of bliss hereafter, and enabled by divine grace to cast myself on the mercy of god through Christ. a peace and joy entered my heart, to which till then I had been an entire stranger. This has

occasionally been interrupted by unbelieving doubts & fears, but with the help of a gracious god, I have been enabled to dismiss these, by repairing to the only hope of the sinner, the lamb that was slain. and now, trusting that he will keep me from falling, through life, and believing he will save me at last, not for anything I am, or can do, for I see nothing in me nor about me to merit such great mercy but on the contrary every thing deserving the wrath and curse of god through eternity: But solely, through his own sov'reign grace & love, flowing through the propitiatory blood of Jesus Christ his son.

That, the scriptures of the old and new Testaments, are a revelation of the will of god to fallen man, this being attested by such evidence as no one with [an] unbiased mind can resist. That they contain a perfect rule of faith and practice. "All [0003]

scripture being given by inspiration of god, and profitable for doctrines for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," From these we learn that there is one god, in three persons, Father, son, and holy spirit; that he is the creator preserver, and moral governor of the universe___That man was created by him holy and happy. but broke his law, and introduced rebellion into the world, thereby losing the favour and image of god, and entailing sin and misery on himself and all his posterity, "By one man sin entered into the world," and "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners"___The total depravity of all men, "There is none righteous, no, not one"

God's righteous law being violated, man might have been justly condemned to eternal punishment, the desert of his sin, but god, in infinite mercy and love, devised a way whereby the claims of his justice are satisfied and the sinner saved, By the substitutionary sufferings & death of his own son, who offered himself, a sacrifice without spot to god. Thus, procuring a righteousness, which is unto, and upon all them that [...] the sinner who renounces his self-righteousness, and places all his dependance on the righteousness of christ, is justified before god. and assisted by the spirit of god, works out his own deliverance from the pollution of sin- all are invited to accept salvation through Christ but because of the moral depravity of man, a divine influence is necessary to make him willing to receive it, which is promised to all who ask it; and those who choose to reject this salvation must perish___That the son is truly & properly god, equal with the Father- The divinity

and personality of the holy spirit___Resurrection and final Judgement___Eternity of future bliss & punishment

Baptism___Weekly communion___Congregational or Independent form of church government,

Experiencing in some degree that happiness which the gospel imparts, and feeling, in some measure, my obligation to redeeming love, it is my earnest desire to consecrate my whole life to the advancement of the cause of our blessed redeemer in the world, thereby endeavouring to evince my love & gratitude to him "who though rich, yet for our sakes became poor"

David Livingston
[0004]

The Rev.^d John Arundel

Mission House Bloomfield Street

London