

Letter to Joseph J. Freeman, 18 July 1842

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)
[0001]

Kuruman 18th July 1842

Rev^dJ. J. Freeman

Dear Sir

A period of twelve months has now nearly elapsed since my arrival in the country of the Bechuanas. And though during that time ample opportunities have been afforded me for ascertaining the real state of this mission, I have not untill now felt it to be my duty to make any definite statement to the Directors respecting the amount of amelioration of which, by the devoted labours of the missionaries and Divine favour, the Bechuanas here have been the subjects. And I am not at all sorry that I have refrained so long, for in gradually becoming conversant with their condition, some things exceeding and others falling within my expectations would probably have swayed my judgement & prevented me coming to a calm conclusion, had I written sooner on this point. Untill lately too, I was not fully aware of the proper point from which to view the improvement which has been effected, We must not only be conversant with the present condition of the Bechuana converts. We must be intimately acquainted with others sunk low in the same depths of degradation, from which these have been raised, before we can appreciate the magnitude of the change. To me lately arrived from England the condition of the converts presented many features of pleasing interest. But not untill after I had visited the tribes in the Interior which may be called the facsimilies of what the converts were, was I able to see, in all their greatness, the wonderful works of the Lord. This contrast between what they
[0002]

were, and have now become is most striking, and it forces on my mind with greater power than ever the conviction, that the gospel has lost none of its pristine efficacy. It is still, thanks be to the Lord, the power of God unto salvation, and the evidences of its power which I here witness will I believe make me cherish

higher ideas than ever of the efficacy of the instrument with which entrusted for turning the nation to God.

The number of those who give good evidence of a decided change of heart, when compared with the amount of population on the station, is very large, and we are delighted to behold from time to time large additions made to it. Many of these too, are such as we should scarcely have expected to see made trophies of grace. These accessions are constituted of not only the young and vigorous, But the old and grey headed whose hearts had been subjected to a long course of induration, come forward as will, and profess their determination to devote even their eleventh hour to the service of Him who died for them. The Lord is indeed doing great things amongst us, and our hearts rejoice the works of this[His] hands, I can the more freely hear testimony to the mighty effects which have and do still follow the faithful and devoted labours of my elder bretheren in this place, as my instrumentality has in no way contributed to the result. And from my knowledge of the character of M^{esrs} Hamilton and Edwards, I believe in their communication to the Directors they must have always kept considerably within what they might have told of the progress of the cause of Christ through their instrumentality -

One of the most pleasant features of the mission is the progress made by the children in the infant school under M^{rs} Edwards. Founded and (with only [0003] only occassional assistance from one of the natives) carried on from its commencement entirely by herself, it shews what an amount of influence may be exerted over a country by [^][the devotedness of] a single individual. The parents form a mighty contrast with their fellow country men still in darkness, and it is nearly as great between them and their children, indeed the intelligent expression of countenance visible even to strangers and their amount of knowledge, would almost lead one to fancy they belonged to another species, and I have no hesitation in asserting that if the efficient tuition of their instructress is in the arrangement of Providence continued to them, there will be as much difference between the intellectual development of children and parents, as we see between the physical development of our agricul[-] -tural and town population in England - I look to the infant school with particular satisfaction for it furnishes me with the hope that many with hearts embued with piety and minds capable of being

stored with knowledge will spring up from it an[...] [d]
go forth to make known in distant regions the unsearch[-]
able riches of Christ.

It is with much pleasure I can thus bear my humble
testimony to the efficiency of the bretheren who have
preceeded me in this part of the missionary field, and
while I magnify the grace manifested both in and by
them, I pray to be enabled to walk with humility and zeal
in their footsteps. May the same power which supported them
ever uphold and cause me to be faithful -

The church is in a most flourishing condition, and though
there are still some points in the character of the converts
which require the exercise of charity and forbearance in
us, a visible improvement is going on. It is not a
stand still church. It is making headway against the
world, and in several instances the truth is beginning
to prevail over their selfish national character, the per-
-son who conducted my waggon into the Interior in one
of my journies is an instance, for when I paid
[0004]
him eighteen dollars as wages he immediately laid down twelve
as his subscription to the Auxiliary Missionary society. May
the holy spirit be poured out on us more abundantly, so that
the spirit of benevolence may be increased, and all the
dark places of the Interior soon feel its blessed effects.

I am Dear Sir

Affectionately yours

David Livingston

P.S. I wrote the Directors on the 3^d inst. and told them some
particulars of my journey in the Interior. No instructions
having in the mean time arrived I intend in a short
time to proceed thither again and with the Divine permission
remain there several months - Visit the tribes north of the
Bamangwato and while making it a preaching tour, will
endeavour to make as much progress in the acquisition of
their dialects as the time will allow.

~~Care of Revd Dr Phillips~~
~~Cape Town~~
Rev^dJ. J. Freeman
Mission House
Blomfield St
London

single