

Letter to John McRobert, 14 July 1843

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Kuruman 14th July 1843

My Dear Brother in Christ

I thank you for the good but little bit you to the excellent letter of your partner And I now take a sheet in order to provoke you to do the same. I do not to have seen you but if you studied at Glasgow we often have been near each other & very likely we have looked each others countenance in our attendance at the Academy of D^r Wardlaw, 1836-7. But that is of little compared to the community of feeling which I trust we . Our hearts are drawn to the same centre of attraction they long to see the benefits of the great Redemption by all the human family, & you make me glad telling me of the progress of the good cause in Scotland I wish I could give you as encouraging news from Africa however the chariot of the gospel goes on but slowly have other materials to work upon than you, the people with you deal know immediately what you wish to be at here the minds of the people are so earthly when we acquainted with their modes of thinking it almost makes believe we have not got humanity to deal with, our nature sink lower that it has done in the case of Bechuanas foolish hearts are darkened - their minds & conscience defiled. As a nation they are the greatest cowards in world. Afraid to speak of death and yet if they can kill danger of being killed they glory in murder. In of the Interior tribes I have seen men with from 30 to 40 scars - the marks of incisions made after each murder been committed. they did not seem sorry for it with an air of triumph have asked me to count scars as if they were highly meritorious in having so many

[0002] females are the tillers of the ground & have all the heavy burdens to them. A man is not ashamed to say he cannot carry a but his wife can & he will go & tell her to do it - their ideas medicine are that all good is done & evil is prevented by witchcraft they imagine that whatever way we use the medicine it will the same effect. If a child refuses to drink medicine they will it on its head or drink it themselves. If their guns miss they ask medicine to heal them & Sechele chief of the Bakwain wanted me to give him some to make him run fast in . He shewed me a piece of root which he used for very purpose. their music too is still in an state of . two notes are all they possess and I have heard them away at them through the whole night. their language is as simple as possible & very easily learned. It is an tongue & in this respect somewhat resembles the Hebrew know more than a dozen words in it which very nearly the Hebrew one of which I may mention as it has caused to believe the Septuagint rendering of Manna is the right one yo? What is it this? is just what the Bechuanas would if placed in the same position as the Israelites when they What is it? But of course these instances in it resembles that language are only accidental - All our terms have been recently coined & are not understood the natives generally. Some the manufacture a very missionary are curious enough and I could give you amusement by them were they not associated with great disadvantage to the speedy progress of our cause. I give you a specimen of a word as good as could have adopted in order to shew you the difference existing between work & yours. the word for soul is one used for breath, air or steam of a pot. the same I believe as in languages but should we proceed to speak of it as man without a number of explanations very likely our would be interrupted by shouts of laughter. "What does man mean by talking about steam? can we eat it, is it

[0003] that [^][he] tells us so much about it"? this is not a difficult term to to them but some of the others are as unlike the idea we intend convey as is the sound of a waggon wheel, this Theological language a great hindrance. It requires a long course of training before they brought to the state in which you can appeal to them on the of religion with the assurance that they are not taking our words in an opposite sense from what we intend know that the spirit is always in the word and that if presented accord-to His mind he will render it effectual But the earthly sense which the natives have always used the words constitutes a great to our doing so. If that influence is necessary any and it is absolutely so everywhere how much more here, where the minds of men are so deplorably degraded, nothing peirce through this thick crust of ignorance which envelopes souls but the power of the Almighty. Let us have your for the manifestation of that power But you require to be here to feel the utter hopelessness of our cause it.

I have occupied so much space with these details have very little room for anything else But you may feel in our modes of operation in itinerary. We have no herethe weary lumbering Dutch waggon drawn by ; a pack ox or our own lower extremities are the only of conveyance. When we arrive at a village & wish to a regular service we are obliged to ask the chief to collect people, the place of concourse is the enclosure for the , sitting down among them we begin by an address generally one subject to which we confine ourselves as long as they attentive to what is said. If we speak on more than subject they generally forget all we have said. And the address we have prayer, if they have been accustomed hear the gospel we sing but if not that is omitted, those wish to depart then go away and with those who we get into conversation on the subject of the address I believe more good is done by conversations than by addresses. they seldom ever object to what we

[0004] told them But many of them are bitter opponents to the gospel old especially are our bitter enemies, they cannot bear the idea parting with their younger wives nor the impurities to which have long been accustomed, Of the old however there is great a proportion converted as of the young, perhaps the proport the former is greater, it is certainly such as to strike one from with surprise. I believe in England the conversion of the old have long rejected the gospel is rare But here they have not gospel hardened & perhaps this may account for the fact their frequent conversion -

I lately saw in the country of the Bamangwato a son of Conrad Buys runaway dutch boer who did immense mischief to the early . His father is dead & all his children 7 in number are dead or in slavery to the ~~other~~ natives, the mother of the lad saw was a native, he is in a wretched condition, speaks language & is dressed as a native. He has forgotten all God & Jesus, but remembers his father was accustomed read a book kneel down to pray yet has forgot every of dutch. His father was a most abandoned character like the rest of the Dutch boers he had it seems a portion our genuine [^][Scotch] church going formality I felt sad as I on this poor relict, the seed of evil doers shall been renowned.

the church here is in rather a low state just now and been so for many months. We have had no stirrings us since the commencement of the commotions in Interiorthe rumours of wars seemed to occupy the of the natives to the exclusion of anything better. We the arrival of the new bretheren with M^r Moffat may a season of revival, they are now in the Colony it is a long way off from this outlandish quarter you enjoy the presence of your Saviour & with Him Temporal & Spiritual blessing is the prayer of affectionately D Livingston

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