

Letter to John Arundel, 22 December 1841

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

I should feel greatly obliged by a communication however short. Please let me know how you are in health, my sheet is filled & I have not said half of what I would but I shall write you again I hope a more connected letter, Yours affectionately
D Livingston

Kuruman 22 Dec 1841

My Dear Sir

You kindly permitted me to address you occasionally a private communication and though I have now been away from England more than twelve months I have no yet availed myself of that privilege but I have not delayed long. I have indeed been long from England but I have only been but a very short time here. My time has been spent in the long long journey to this place and recently I have returned from another pretty long journey beyond it— I undertook this latter journey by the advice and with the approbation of M^{rs} Hamilton & Edwards to whose counsels I was commended by the Directors before leaving home. The object of it was to ascertain the state & disposition of certain tribes lying north & North East of this. They had frequently sent messages to the brethren requesting missionaries and as frequently the brethren were anxious to visit them but Mr E. could not leave Mr Hamilton alone for so long a period as was necessary and it was only when we arrived that the way seemed open As the Interior is to be my field of labours I confess I was glad of an opportunity of entering it at this time--

Our journey was in going & returning at least 700 miles in length, but though so long we were not at any time more than 250 directly North. This however is farther in that direction than any missionaries have yet been. In one case the people had not before seen a white face and in some others only one, viz. that of an enterprising trader who has frequently penetrated far beyond anyone else We were however everywhere received with respect and by those tribes situated farthest off even with kindness I was astonished at the difference observable near to mission stations. Within a distance of 100 miles, the people who do not live actually on the stations are violent

opponents of the gospel. They partially know the requirements of the gospel. They know they must put away their superfluous wives &c &c, and on their account they hate it cordially. They wont listen. the chiefs to please the teachers call the people together but the latter know the minds of the chiefs & they refuse to come They flocked round the waggons for medicine & would talk on any subject except that which of all others is the most important to be known, And I was pained to hear the scorn thrown on the name of Jesus when they thought I did not hear them. One chief got up a dance round Mr Hamilton lately to drown his voice while preaching. This was an outrage that [0002]

would not be committed by any other chief but himself but though not openly opponents to that extent they are no less certainly unfavourable to preaching. When I say this I dont refer to those situated far beyond us. These know nothing of the gospel nor of missionaries except that we are good people & friendly with all. But they equally with those nearer & perhaps to a greater degree possess an impression that Europeans are a decidedly superior race of people & it would be dangerous to provoke our enmity, the respect to their opinion of us, it must have undergone a complete revolution in the space of the last 20 years. And to what are all to attribute this favourable change by which any white man may travel through the length & breadth of the land without fear of molestation: It would be pleasant could we attribute it to the influence of the gospel which has so long, so affectionately & faithfully been preached to them I expected this was the case but when I have seen one impression over all the tribes and this stronger in porportion as we recede from the regions where the gospel is known I am compelled to give the credit of the change to a less lovely influence - viz. the successive defeat of two large bands of marauders who had overcome & treated with great cruelty nearly all the Bechuanas, by a mere handful of boors & Griquas But this impression which rests in full force in all the tribes beyond 100 miles of this will not love remain so They are now purchasing guns themselves rapidly. They are visited by traders every year, and also by Griquas for the same purpose with the traders. And these latter are giving them the diseases of Europeans without any of their civilization. (The venereal disease was unknown amongst them until this same year it was taken into the Interior by a Griqua whom I know) Persons also from the tribes adjoining us are passing on for the sake of getting game; and if a rigorous effort is not instantly made by us I see no prospect left but that soon the tribes situated 200 & 250 miles distant will become as much opponents of the gospel as those within 100 miles of us Now you must not think me visionary when I say

the effort could be made immediately. We don't need European missionaries to do it. They are good but much can be done with far less expensive machinery. The whole of the tribes we visited could now be placed under effective instructions had we only the means to employ them. The distant tribes would all receive them, not however from a desire to be instructed for I could not ascertain that motive was present in the mind of a simple individual we visited. It is not by any means like the South Sea Islands. One wishes [0003]

a teacher because it will make him of more importance in the eyes of his neighbours. Another expects a lot of guns with him &c and [But] it is well they are willing at all to allow teachers to come amongst them some of the tribes nearer would not allow so much. They say if a white teacher comes we will listen to him but we wont have a black one. This however is just an excuse for they wont listen to a white teacher neither. The native teachers are really most efficient agents in the dissemination of religious truth and if we had two with each of the Interior tribes I dont hesitate to affirm that as much would by the Divine blessing be affected by them in the way of removing prejudice & enlightening & saving the people as would be effected by any two Europeans for the first half dozen years at least. That you may judge whether I am right or not I shall mention some facts which I wish I could mention to the Director without appearing to make an invidious comparison. The facts stare me every day in the face and were I was anxious to stand entirely aloof from party feeling and anything like impeaching that wisdom of those who have preceded me in the work & who are all greatly my superiors in prudence & piety. I should certainly make them publicly known to the Directors. But knowing that they are fully aware of the value of native agents & that they need nothing from me to strengthen their convictio[...] [n] on the subject. I do no more than mention them to yo[...] [u] privately for your own information--

It has been the policy of the Griqua Town mission[...] [aries] all along to employ native agents. The consequence has been the believers have increased in a compound ratio. They have many imperfections but God has blessed them wonderfully. On our way here we unexpectedly came upon a village on a Sunday morning. The want of water having compelled us to travel at that time. They knew nothing of us & we were entirely ignorant of them yet we found that public worship & school for the children were regularly kept up although from the illness of M^r Hughes & the distance being 60 or so miles from Griqua Town, they had been visited by no missionary for 10 months previously. This fact greatly strengthened my predilections in favour of employing as soon as possible all who are capable of making known the way of life. We had the best possible opportunity of

observing them conduct, and who after seeing it would not wish to have a band of such assistants to aid on the course of truth & holiness. They have imperfections but I see nothing else in the operations of the G. Town mission to account for its success but these very imperfect instruments. The missionaries now can do little else than itinerate & superintend them, and they occupy not only what may be called their own field but great part of ours
[0004]

Am I sorry to see them stretching out on all sides & passing us as they are now doing W. by N.? No I rejoice at it & dont care though they hug us by & by in their arms & squeeze us out towards the North. If no other motive will send us North then prayers will. It is all the same of whoever brings in sinners to Christ. It is common cause & I am really glad [...] at-see to see the work going on. But unfortunately a little rivalry other than prov[er]b[ly] to love & good works has got in amongst us & those who have been longer in the work have local associations which prevent them seeing something in the same light we do. They look at the subject from a different point of view & consequently it appears in another form to them-- But native agency has been tried here too as well as at Griqua Town. After Mr Moffat went to England he seems to have changed a little his opinions on that subject for he wrote back advising the bretheren here to make a trial of two; These were appointed and the consequence has been a large accession to the church. Each at his location has more members under him than are at the station. That is they have more than 2/3 of the church & the chief accessions to it are always from their ministry. Add to this they are much more consistent in their deportment than those here & so affectionate to us & to each other it is quite a treat to visit them - And this notwithstanding Mr Edwards is an excellent sicuana scholar & an excellent preacher in it too. Since I understand him I am quite delighted to hear him I believe this is the case too with the G. mission for the truth seems so much more effective & comes home to the heart better in proportion as it is divested of all the strangers which attaches [to] foreigners in every country.

I am most anxious that more native teachers be employed & in this anxiety the bretheren E & Hamilton now cordially join along with this I make an application to the Directors and I wait with much anxiety an answer.

~~Care of Revd Dr Phillip. Church Square~~
Cape Town
Rev^d John Arundel
Mission House
Bloomfield St.
London
single sheet