

Letter to Catherine McRobert, 24 June 1843

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Kuruman 24 June 1843

Dear Sister in Christ

Your kind & excellent *letter* I found a few ago on my return from another visit to the Interior, and I you the perusal of it had gladdened my heart, indee[d] is so "white" I dont know how to thank you enough your kindness. You request that I write you a long o[ne] return. How can I avoid it? If I only told you all heart would say by way of acknowledgement this sheet be too little. I really do thank you from the bottom my heart and I bless Him who has put it into you feel so much for the degraded & perishing & which the other friends who have contributed I beg you will my warmest thanks. This I believe you will do But what will you say if, assuming much than your [^] [measure of] "old acquaintanceship freedom", I request to begin & beg from them again. You must canvass all over again. They have furnished one item more valuable contribution you have yet to secure want you to make them feel that the teacher I have secured for them is their agent & not mine. They feel a personal interest in him as their missionary the heathen. They kindly resolve to help to support him how I shall rejoice if they assure me they are determined

to bear him on their hearts. I think if their prayers concentrated on their own agent He would be much successful. I believe our prayers are often unanswered account of a want of "specification" We deal too in generalisations our petitions want that focusing they have when we have a specific object in . Do we not feel more earnest when we have only suit to urge "one thing" to desire of the Lord - than we have many? I think we do, & therefore I anxious that the dear friends should feel something being personally connected with him. If you & take the same view of the subject you must me as your servant, I shall gladly instruct & him & do anything else you wish. If you a different view from mine & think I am wrong must tell me. If you wish to make any suggestions

shall write M^r McRobert and give him some account of the state of the country & our prospects of any extension of the gospel therein shall write again in the course of a few months

In the meantime believe me affectionately yours in the bonds of the gospel

David Livingst[one]

[0002]

respecting him, by all means, out with them, you must not I am so dreadfully learned or wise as to be beyond listening suggestions in these matters. Write with the greatest freedom whatever questions you choose for I assure you we who situated in this outlandish quarter, never feel "touchy" with who speak out their minds. What some people home call "clerical dignity" we never think of, indeed I if it were suspected here we should call it "nonsense"

I shall take an early opportunity to give you a full of your representative. He is a deacon in the here & one of the most sensible consistent converts to the Mission, the elder missionaries who are able to judge say He & his sister have more principle any other in the church, and they have been uniformly in their walk ever since their conversion. As general information He is at least equal to the best informed his nation. He always attends the school although he is the of two children But I should mislead you if I made you his knowledge ~~was~~ is extensive. No, the Bechuanas have yet had the means of acquiring much knowledge. He knows the way of life & can preach to the point

& with as much affection as any Betchuana I ever heard shall give you more information respecting him as as I see how it goes with M^r Edwards & myself in projected mission into the Interior

You may see by the inclosed that I cheerfully comply with suggestion respecting the girls in Miss Smiths school impression on my mind is that they are little girls But may be great grown creatures and take offence at plainness of my style. Please do read it over & if it is not exact thing apologize for me. I thank them for their intentions towards our mission. What would be useful is I fear different from what they have wished send Nails of different sizes, hinges locks &c. would be more value than anything else. We intend to commence

[a new] station very near to the place where M^r Campbell about to go home & ~~also~~ not far also from the of the town of the notorious Mosilikatze, and as we commence first by building houses, the above named would be particularly serviceable, knives, scissors, beads

[0003] , hankerchiefs, medicines are also valuable But specimens of needlework that which I suppose they are most anxious to send I must say are the useful to the mission. I should regret if friends should send me articles clothing to be distributed gratuitously. It does the natives harm when they such things without feeling they have earned them. If strong of that ~~description~~[nature] were sent with the power of giving them as wages labour, or rewards, I should be thankful & it is probable they would help elevate the people But indiscriminate distribution ~~distribution~~ although among church members creates endless heartburnings, the rich offended if they dont get as much if not more than the poor cant understand why a difference should be made since they are from the Christians in England, they never feel in any [way] grateful thus for these presents, & they dont value them half so as if they [^] [had] earned them. Indeed the chief object for which boxes of clothes are sent, (viz.) to increase our influence them & thus lead them to the Saviour, is never accomp[-]

-lished. Nay more than this, I believe from all I have witnessed they are injurious to the cause. According to the instructions our kind friends we have distributed their presents chiefly among members of our churches. We have tried to be as impartial possible, But notwithstanding all this the majority of them believe have pursued a system of favouritism & this is anything favourable to our success among them. Frequently have heard missionaries wish that they never had had anything do with these cases of wearing apparel But somebody [...] the liberty to tell the dear friends who send them, [...] they are altogether useless, they would however be [...] if we had absolute power over them; suppo[...] [se] power to ask for them too the expenses of carriage with [...] would do away with much of the evil these things [...] . I think I hear you say, well, who would [...] the missionaries had used such freedom [...] ; nobody I concieve in England, But unless [...] positively. Interested traders & others ~~after~~ [would] circul[...] [ate] among the natives as [should] counterbalance all the [...] another line of policy. If the little girls should wish to your native teacher a present of their handywork I think gown for his wife who in size is not unlike M^{rs} Kirk would a good effect on both their minds. Colour is nothing them. It may have as many as the coat of Joseph & each be a recommendation to it, if it were only strong is everything while colour, size &c are nothing in comparison & old black coat for him if strong would be considered inval[-]

-uable & sent specifically for him would not create any of unpleasantness above referred to.

His name is Mabalwe

David Moleha[ne]. But he passes more frequently by his name Mabalwe (the second a sounding like a in father) shall give him some plain instructions in medicine in order to make

[0004] match for the rain making doctors of this country. Everything here is attributed witchcraft indeed they believe no one would ever die if he were not bewitched then the treatment of their doctors is always to destroy the effects of . A few days ago I was present at a case of this kind. The of the Batlaro was [^] [last year] dangerously ill & sent a pressing message for my I went and was successful in affording him aid. Ever since he had unbounded confidence in our medicines. His father who still is one of the greatest doctors in the country was much offended him for his change of opinion & hinted that I had done more attempt the cure of the body. "He has [^] [said he] put some medicine into your to change it so You must not send for him again." The chief of the son became sick when I was away in the Interior. The son for my arrival but the father tried by all his art & incantations cure without the aid of the "foreigner" & despairing of success he sent to native doctor to assist him. The two combined were busy extract[-] all manner of things from different parts of her body when I arrived the Interior. Bits of Rhinoceros hide, bones, &c &c, were exhibited after had sucked some time at small incisions made on the surface & of all believed that these were the causes of the pain, & had been put into by some witch. But she got no better. My professional bretheren were daunted but maintained that there must still be some of these things within. As the natives consider me as great a witch as any of I ventured to give my advice in the matter & recommended the doctors take an emetic before they commenced sucking again lest they should have decieving themselves, the things coming out of their own bodies instead of of that of the patient. They did not wish this, nor yet that of my exam[-] their mouths But one of them stole away unpercieved by me & his bled-her cupped her of them artfully separating the fibrine from red particles exhibited it in triumph as a proof that he could make immediately drew a little blood from the arm of a person by, separated the fibrins by means of a little [^] [warm] water & the whole party that this was really a constituent the blood,- nothing else. The doctor found an excuse - wiser of the day to leave [...] to another village, all this [^] [of this] will I hope assist [...] Mabalwe in his work

~~Care of Revd Dr Phillip Cape Town~~

~~5 letters~~

1843

Rev^d John M^cRobert

Cambuslang

near Glasgow

For M^{rs} M^cRobert