

Letter to William Thompson, 27 September 1855

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[0001]

Linyanti 27th September
[Copied] 1855

My Dear M^r Thompson

I have just learned that my Arabian post office man is detained at Sesheke by the sickness of one of his party so I am glad of the opportunity to write a little appendix to that hurried note of the 13th. I particularly wish to express my sympathy in the bereavement you have been called on to suffer in the departure of your most excellent father in law. I hear of it only now and as I have always since my attendance on his theological lectures and ministry regarded him with very great affection I think of his removal with unfeigned sorrow. May God grant us grace to follow in his footsteps. Unquestionably he served God in his day and generation with rare abilities and unswerving devotion through good & through bad reports. When such are removed we feel somewhat nearer to the grave. There seems to be nothing now between it and us. May we live to Christ and for the prosperity of his great cause and receive the welcome well done as we have every reason to believe our much lamented [0002] [friend] has ~~done~~. I shall always revere his memory.

I believe I did not refer very pointedly to what may be called missionary prospects in this region. And the reason is I feel perplexed on one point viz. the insalubrity of the climate. It is no obstacle to myself personally. I think no London society's "zendeling" worth his salt. would bolt at that. Even though we have

no law against cowardice (vide the 2^d Art. of the Bushman commando mighty men of valour) most of our fellows must feel in the same way. And my better half would go as readily as any one. But I am not clear on exposing my little ones without their own intelligent self dedication. As far as opportunity goes there is no lack. There are tribes and villages without number to the North and East of this and all would be proud of the presence of a white man. I know of no hindrance to missionary operations in any part of the country North of the Zambesi and towards the centre of the Continent. And every day we hear of commerce extending its ramifications in all directions. Only think of the way this letter goes. by an Arab from [0003]

Zanzibar who takes charge of a party of Makololo with ivory for Loanda. When they return my late companions will be ready to start again. So one relay will always be abroad on business. Before my trip the Makololo never visited another tribe except to plunder. They have not given this trade up yet, for two forays were made during my absence. (not being in the country I did not lend my pot ~~again~~) What a mercy, the "ill report" wont be retailed in Government House again) But [^][the] remedy for that and every evil is being applied. The blessed word of the living God has been preached though in much weakness - and the prayers of Gods people are ascending as incense before the throne of the Hope of Israel, and the time is coming, the set time, when all nations shall call Him blessed.

I have been guilty of some innocent wonderment in seeing it stated in terms lugubrious enough that the Bakwains Bakhatla and Bahurutse &c were not a whit better for all our labours, nay much worse. I followed the rule invariably of making no enquiries respecting the labours or conduct of other missionaries among natives and therefore can say [0004]

nothing about Bahurutse or Bakhatla. But
 about the Bakwains the verdict would I most
 sincerely think, require reconsideration. During
 the whole of our sojourn there we strove so to
 conduct ourselves as that there should be no
 cause of offence except concerning the law
 of our God. I feel humbly and heartily
 thankful to our Heavenly father for enabling
 us to effect this. This is a point of
 vital importance in estimating what has
 been effected among a people. So when
 we left we had not one single enemy
 in the whole tribe x [*[Note: if it were necessary for me to seek a "character" I would confidently refer to
 the Bakwains for it]*]and even when the
 waggon was inspanned on our departure
 for Sebituane's country. Sechele and
 his principal [men][^] tried to persuade me
 to remove to the (afterwards) scene of the
 massacre of his people, offering to build
 a house and church free of expence.
 I need not refer to my reasons for
 refusing- (I am perfectly satisfied as to their
 validity) except that the principal one was
 determined hostility to the requirements
 of the gospel unmixed with any hostility
 to ourselves. Some may think this
 [0005]
 hostility to the gospel evidence of deterior-
 ation from their state of heathenism
 I believe it to be a most important
 step in advance from that state.
 for though they refuse to bow in
 humility to the Divine law, the truths
 they have imbibed exert a most
 salutary influence on their morals * [*[Note: Sechele asked the Boers on commando not to fight on
 Sunday. The former beat the Bakwains hollow in lying & meanness - and it would be an insult to compare the
 honesty of the Bakwains with the dishonesty of the Boers]*]
 I know this to be a fact - a plain
 palpable fact. And if any one
 doubts it. As he cannot compare
 what the Bakwains were with what
 they are let a comparison be
 made between the Makololo and
 Bakwains. Why in[^][coming from Makololo] meeting with
 them and [^][some of the] people near Kuruman
 who still hate the gospel as much
 as the Bakwains I used to feel
 I had entered civilized life, I
 don't wonder at it. The word of
 the living God has been brought in
 contact with their hearts & [minds] His

word has life and power. Few
[0006]
human souls can withstand its force
and no hatred however deep can
quench its power. I bless God
from the bottom of my heart for
allowing me to sow the good seed
among the Bakwains. Their present
posture is a terrible one if they continue
so to the end. But though they do [^][so] it
is God's will the offer should be made
though thousands both white and black
make a bad use of it. You will probably
live longer than I shall. Remember
seed was sown among the people
of Sechele.

I thank you for publishing the
"Pot" defence. I have not seen the
remarks of Scholz or whoever it was
that wrote in a defamatory way against
me. I bear the poor wretched Boers in
[^][the interior] no malice - I never did, but I pitied
their ignorance and wickedness - Although
I were a Boer myself I could not
help saying [^][as they do] that in morality~~and good~~
~~sense~~ they are decidedly inferior to
[0007]

the Bakwains and considerably worse
indeed than the heathen who have had
no advantages. I think it is not usual
for Editors of Newspapers to publish defamatory
remarks against persons whom. they
know cannot, for months or as in
my case years, have an opportunity of
answering them. They would not
in England publish the like against
officers in an Artic expedition. Would
they? But you have got a new
constitution now and M^r Buchanan
has crept under the wing of
a likelier hen. requiescat in pace

I have got only one scrap from
you but it accompanied the celestial
map & pamphlets. Go on & fear nothing
my friend. O, O!! What a shame to
spring on the poor bishop. The first
and only bishop and box his ears
so unmercifully.

Believe me very Affectionately

Yours

David Livingstone
[0008]

I get no letters from my wife. Cannot
account for it no way. Hope she has
not come to the Cape. But you will
take care of her no doubt.

Excuse this nasty Yankee paper
I have nought else

May I beg you to give the Directors
notice of my welfare at this date. I
cannot write them now

Wretched Yankee paper this
all else is expended - assuredly
they need rags

via St. Helena
Rev^d.W. Thompson
Cape of Good Hope