

## Letter to Fergus Ferguson, 28 July 1843

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

Published by Livingstone Online ([livingstoneonline.org](http://livingstoneonline.org))

[0001]

Kuruman 28<sup>th</sup> July 1843

My Dear Brother in Christ

Since I have been permitted in the kind Providence of our merciful Redeemer to enter the missionary field I have often felt the duties connected with that precious privilege towards the bretheren at home. We in our sphere of labour ought to endeavour to furnish you with information whereby your sympathies in the blessed cause may be enlarged, your zeal increased & your thanksgivings caused to abound. But with respect to this duty I feel I have come very far short & more especially with respect to you. I believe I have written all the deacons with whom I was more particularly acquainted & now I don't well know how to excuse the omission of you among the number I might urge the usual plea in such cases of having had good intentions but that would scarcely satisfy myself I shall therefore in this give you some account of the manner in which I have been employed and if you see in that cause to excuse me I shall try to do better in future

The best news I could give you would be that I had been instrumental in converting sinners, this however I cannot give for I have been employed chiefly in the work of preparation. You are perhaps aware that when sent out, our Directors instructed us to remain at Kuruman untill the arrival of Mr Moffat. No one else having much local knowledge of the country it was thought desirable that we should be employed in acquiring the language &c. untill he should come & assist us in choosing a proper site for a new mission. I did not however find the language such a formidable affair as was expected & very soon set off to gain a local knowledge for myself. To this object I conjoined others such as a more thorough acquaintance with the tongue than can be got by sitting with one tribe or section of the people. Doing good by means [of]

[0002]

native teachers &c. the prosecution of these has led me very far into the interior. Farther than has been reached by any other European so that I can gratefully say I have preached

the gospel beyond every other man's line of things. the Directors have expressed their cordial approbation of the steps I took & have instructed us to proceed immediately on the knowledge of the interior I have acquired & form a new settlement, the site[location] will be in sight of what M<sup>r</sup> Campbell called the Kurrichane range. the good man longed to have a mission established there and no fewer than seven of the bretheren have been sent out with appointments to that part of the country But circumstances have always prevented the accomplishment of his wish. Of the seven only one (M<sup>r</sup> Edwards) has seen the place of his appointment & in his case it is after a residence of 20 years in the country. I have no doubt but you will be glad to hear that a prospect of a permanent settlement is now before us. In two or three days M<sup>r</sup>E & I expect to be on our way to erect huts on the spot chosen.

After hearing of our cheering prospects as to a settlement on one part of the interior you may perhaps be anxious to know our prospects for the whole continent. Well I cannot say they are bright, there seems a cloud over Africa & that seems to be composed of its pestilential malaria. This portion of the continent now the most healthy would if we had somewhat more rain be one of the most unhealthy in this world. Our immense sandy plains would be swamps. Indeed there is abundance of evidence that at no very distant date they were in reality so, & even now when a little moisture exists than usual fevers are sure to break out. Fevers seem to be the great barrier to the civilization of Africa ~~beyond us~~. There is a lake called Mokhoror or of the canoe about 200 miles beyond my farthest point [0003]

north. It has never been seen by a white man but there can be no doubt of its existence. It stretches from the N. E. to the South West, and all the country around is a dead level. Fevers abound so much there one of the chiefs of the Bangwaketze called Sebegwe lost so many of his men by them he had not a sufficiency to take care of his cattle. Last year a native who travelled with me was affected by it & after all my care & labour with him he carries its effects about with him yet. This lake is a barrier to the North West & North East, the Bakalahari desert to the West & the De Sagoa Bay fevers to the East are a stronger barrier to the boers from the colony than all the acts of parliament can rear. A little to the North East of our to be station there is a peculiar fly which bites the oxen & the first rain that falls afterwards proves fatal to them all. We who are

almost entirely dependent on these[oxen] for conveyance  
fear the fly as we do fevers. Some traders have  
been left without an ox to drag their waggon  
back again. It is said M<sup>r</sup> Moffat intends visiting  
the Lake Mokhorro or Botletli. that is the best road  
one could take if he wished to explore the interior  
as there are canoes on it & many tribes reside on its  
banks But the fevers. I hope he may return in  
safety. It will however be impossible to establish  
a mission near it now. White men could not live  
there & we have no blacks who could be trusted far  
from missionaries. there are none sufficiently  
enlightened or disinterested to carry on a mission by  
themselves. But we may yet find them. We Europeans  
could go as well as natives but in their most feverish  
places, the sun is so scorching we should be of very  
little use. May the Lord open up the way for us &  
for the success of the blessed cause

[0004]

I think nothing has struck my mind more forcibly in this  
country than the necessity of the Holy Spirits influences in ~~to~~ the  
work of conversion. At home I felt it But here no  
sooner do we become intimately acquainted with the  
character of the people than the mind is overwhelmingly  
convinced that without Divine aid nothing can be done  
with them. This makes me entreat in earnest prayer  
of all my friends, I entreat yours not that I have any  
doubt but that if the truth is presented in the proper manner  
His influences will be withheldthe Lord delights to bless, I  
may not however exhibit the truth in the proper form  
& this constitutes a source of great anxiety, I feel that  
I might live all my life here & do nothing to advance the  
period when the Redeemer shall see of the travail  
of his soul & be satisfied. I implore then your  
prayers that I may be made wise to win souls. If you  
have any suggestions on that subject I shall take it  
kind if you make them. I rejoice to hear of the  
success which has attended your labours. may you  
be still more abundantly successful & may yours be the  
portion of those that turn many to righteousness.

We have great difficulty in conveying truth to mind  
of these heathen in the fact that all our theological  
terms are newly coined, & sometimes these are far from  
being adopted to convey the ideas. the word [for instance] adopted in the  
testament for holiness & sanctification is that which  
is made use of when a man sees a nice fat ox or cow.  
Beauty is nearest the word in our language although not  
that exactly. Other words have two meanings so if we  
dont take pains perpetually to explain which we mean  
we are quite misapprehended. When speaking of Sin

& using one word to designate it we may be understood as talking of pieces of dried [...] cows ordure which are used as bull But when the truth takes hold of the heart they never mistake, and it is remarked in this country that there are as many of the old converted as of the young I believe this is different from what occurs where people have had the corpus from infancy & [0005]

I am very sorry to hear of some disagreeable circumstances which have transpired and that M<sup>r</sup> Moir has thought proper to implicate me in this affair. My memory does not serve me either positively to contradict or affirm, but my father having been my only informant on this subject I have sent an extract from his letter to me at the time it happened which will completely exculpate him. I remember distinctly that I was not the first who introduced the subject He [ Mr Moir] knew perfectly well that a meeting had been called & the subject of it too before he saw me - The fact that M<sup>r</sup> M. left on the last sabbath in church and that he did not see me in London untill about the middle of May seems presumptive evidence that he must have heard of it. I always disapproved of his conduct in that affair. When I saw him in London my conviction was he had come on a most unfortunate speculation I cannot conceive what motive I could have had, in making such a statement as M<sup>r</sup> M. puts into my mouth. Feeling as I have always done that there is the closest relationship between me & my parent I can conceive of nothing but idiotcy which could have induced me to say to one whom I might be sure would make use of my words that my father put his name to a note of censure which in his heart he did not approve. These considerations make me believe & I should like to say it in a Christian spirit that M<sup>r</sup> Moir is surely in error

Have become [...] more of the old than of the young Please present kind regards to [...] [0006]

& to all the family & accept the same yourself from yours affectionately in the bonds of the gospel David Livingston [0007]

I have not yet heard from Fergus & to David I have not yet found it possible to write D.L. [0008]

D. Livingstone

Fergus Ferguson Esq

Rosebank  
near Hamilton  
Lanarkshire  
NB.