

Letter to Fergus Ferguson, 28 July 1843

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Kuruman 28th 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]

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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^r 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^r 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^rE & 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^r 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

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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 &
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I am very sorry to hear of some disagreeable circumstances
which have transpired and that M^r 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 inform-
ant 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^r 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^r 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^r
Moir is surely in error

Have become [...] more of the old than of the young Please present kind regards to [...]
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& to all the family & accept the same yourself from yours affectionately in
the bonds of the gospel David Livingston
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I have not yet heard from Fergus & to David I have not yet
found it possible to write D.L.
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D. Livingstone

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