

Letter to John H. Parker, 11 May 1844

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Mabotsa 11th May 1844

My Dear Brother

I received your most welcome letter and present in January last. We were then busy in packing up in order to leave Kuruman and as every step of our subsequent progress took us farther & farther from the Post Office I have been unable to acknowledge your kindness as promptly as I should otherwise have done. The book for which I heartily thank you, could not have come by any more speedy conveyance But had you posted the letter I should have been cheered by its arrival at least six months sooner. Please transmit your letters always by post for although Scotch I dont think I shall ever grudge to pay even though those from you should cost three times as much as they do from any one else. My heart warms every time I call to remembrance my old fellow students and I am always quite delighted when I hear from them By the bye, what has become of that man Fairbrother? He is the only one of all our squad at Ongar whom I have lost sight of. I heard a long time ago that he was then at college. But he cant be there now unless he is trying to become an S.T.P. or D.D. -

I feel thankful for the trouble you were so kind as to put yourself to respecting the question of Polygamy. I am not however so happy as to feel convinced that your views of the subject are correct But the fact you mention of so many men of ability having supported these views will have the effect of inducing me to follow the same line of conduct I have hitherto done viz, with respect to that subject follow in the track of my predecessors, I still have doubts and a variety of considerations which you dont touch at all tend to keep me in suspense. I am not aware that Christianity gives any licence for assaulting the civil institutions of man, (slavery?) and it is expressly stated that a man may not put away his wife for any cause except one But the polygamist does not seem to have this cause for putting away his inferior wives. We cannot call it adultery when we think of Hagar being sent back by the Divine command into that state But I cannot say that I am right in this & when I think on the subject I always feel perplexed, the same sort of reasoning makes me reject your remarks [0002]

on Tim, III &c God never permitted brawling, striking drunkenness &c as he seems to have done with regard to polygamy & this I concieve precludes it from being called a parallel case But this is not to be a controversial correspondence so I drop the subject.

We came her in Feb^y last and have fairly made a commencement among the Bakhatla. Our cottage is built about 30 miles North West of what is called the Kurechane. We are in a delightful part of the country Mr Moffat's description of the region to the East of us answers in almost every respect to our locality. We have fine scenery, the vegetation luxuriant - the mountains covered with trees (many of them evergreens) to their very summits and abundance of excellent water. But when we think of its moral aspect it is as yet a land of darkness - a vast howling wilderness which has never yielded any of those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father. The people however are kind and agreeable in their manners towards; We have to endure none of those vexations which the earlier missionaries suffered; there is no stealing and comparatively little impudence and pride. But we dont know how long this state of matters may continue, the Bechuanas from being the most abject can be when they like the most insolent provoking fellows in existence, and there is no overcoming them when they are so but by meekness & patience, these virtues seem to have been possessed in an eminent degree by the elder bretheren Hamilton & Moffat. I can conceive what they had to endure better than you and I hope my forbearance will never be put to the test as theirs has been. You have read Moffat's work of course, I think you must have liked it. It is peculiarly interesting to us who know many of the places & persons described. When I read of the manner in which you were honouring its author at home I thought these good people will spoil him But I was most happy to find he was not in the least elated, assumed no superiority over the rest of us who are much his inferiors and appeared eminent by his humility & devotedness to the cause of Jesus [0003]

I got badly hurt by a lion since I came here but by the kindness of God I am nearly well again. These animals are very trouble some to us at times But should the Lord crown our labours to the subversion of the kingdom of him who goeth about as one, it would recompense us for all our troubles. May the Lord grant the accomplishment of His gracious in our experience - I have no news respecting the progress of the cause in the Lattakoo district, as no letters have been recieved since we came here. The church there had for some time been in a dead sort of state owing to the commotions which then distracted the attention of the inhabitants. We hope however the blessing will again be poured out & men [be] prevailed on to think as the whole country is now quite quiet. Rumours of wars have a very different effect here [from] what they have in the newspapers at home. War here affects all for no one knows where it will end and thus the native mind becomes distracted with anxiety. It is also a great hindrance to the progress of the Gospel.

You must be a very learned man by this time. I am sure if I met you at the Cape on your way to India I should ~~know~~ percieve a great difference. Your sentences seem to march out

rank & file with so much ease they make me ashamed of mine which are so straggling. Dont forget then when you can do it with so much ease, to send a fragment now & then to a certain dweller in the wilderness. - I shall be glad to hear that you are sent to China. I don't regret having been sent here but if I had not been connected with the Society I should in all probability been there before now. May you have grace to be faithful unto death in the great work in which we are permitted to engage. Let us remember each other at the throne of grace

Yours ever affectionately David Livingston

Please Address me at Mabotsa, care of D^r Phillip Cape Town [0004]

Care of Rev^d D^r Phillip Cape Town

London Feb.1.1845

M^r J.H. Parker

Homerton College

London

single