

Letter to Joseph J. Freeman, 22 December 1841

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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Kuruman22^d Dec^r 1841

Dear Sir

There is one measure connected with missionary operations viz. the employment of native agency in the work of evangelizing the heathen, to which although in my last communication I did not very pointedly advert. I have been most anxious to call the attention of the Directors. Formerly when viewing the Heathen would at a distance the measure appeared one of great importance and I resolved to give it earliest attention. But now when I have come into close contact with it, and beheld a little of that vast extent of surface over which the population is scattered in the regions before me I powerfully feel its special, nay, overwhelming importance. Having lately in company with Rev^d R. Edwards of this mission performed a journey (in going & returning) of about 700 miles in length, the tract of country we saw seemed to me of immense extent, but when I look to the map it is a mere iota compared to what is yet to be possessed by the missionaries of the cross. But although the territory is larger than can be imagined by any one who has not seen a little of it, and though the tribes are situated at very formidable distances from each other, I see no cause for discouragement. And if at any time the prospects of success assume any other than a bright and cheering aspect it is when I have out of view the machinery of native agency put into vigorous operation –

In stating to the Directors my conviction that in this country this means of evangelization is specially indicated I need scarcely advert to the great efficiency of this class of laborers. Of their warm affectionate manner of dealing with their fellow countrymen - Of their capability to bring the truth itself before the mind entirely divested of that peculiar strangeness which cleaves to foreigners - And of the very eminent success ^of those employed by the bretheren of Griqua Town I am persuaded they are already well aware - Their success is most encouraging, and no less so are the results which have followed the comparatively recent employment of two by this mission. Indeed I have no hesitation in affirming that during the short period of since they have been employed, these two have been as>

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efficient in propagating both a knowledge & love of Christianity as could have been anticipated by even the warmest admirers of native agents. In their hands the work still goes on well, and every now & then our hearts are cheered by goodly accessions to the church of such as we hope that they are the "saved in Christ Jesus"- And if the measure is allowed free operation, if we are allowed by the Directors to employ a few more who in the judgement of the bretheren are fit for the work, we may anticipate conversions by the Divine blessing to increase in a compound ratio, & regions not yet explored by Europeans will soon be supplied with the bread of life

I do most earnestly beg the sanctions of the Direction for the employment of a few who are both able & willing to devote their attention to this work. And in this request I have the full concurrence of these bretheren on whose long experience greater confidence can be placed. I may also state ~~that~~ as a garauntee for the purity of the motives of those who are willing to devote themselves that £10 is by no means sufficient to support a native of this country It is consequently at a sacrifice they engage in the work of the Lord –

With respect to the points at which operations could at present be most advantageously put in operation both the candidates and missionaries who know the country have but one opinion, and that is, that the tribes 250 miles northward ~~than~~ are in a much more favourable state for our object than those in the surrounding localities The adjoining tribes amongst which no regular systematic operations have been carried on, are decidedly hostile to the gospel. They treat missionaries with respect, but at the same time manifest very great opposition to the doctrines we teach. And with scarcely one of them would a native teacher be allowed to live - I state this with diffidence because it is at direct variance with the opinions expressed in my written instructions yet at the same time I indulge the hope that when I state that the very opposite of a great desire for religious instruction prevails, my change of sentiment will not be ascribed to insufficient consider[-] -ation, for conviction has been forced upon me by proofs of which, had it been possible, both my prejudices

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and ~~inclination~~ expectations should have induced me gladly to have revisited the pressure –

The tribes within 100 miles North & North East of this are all partially acquainted with the requirements of the gospel but manifest

the greatest hatred to them, and this is just what our knowledge of the human heart would lead us to expect. The same depravity exists every where and this although to christians it may seem but the bare enunciation of a self evident truth, ought to stand out prominently alongside the expectations of every young missionary. Those tribes however which be at a greater distance say 250 & 300 miles Northward are in quite a different condition. They know nothing of the gospel & consequently form neither a good nor bad opinion of it. They know nothing more of missionaries than that they are a friendly race of whites who love all men. And in many respects we occupy the same position with respect to them as some of our missionaries have with the South Sea Islanders. There exists a strong impression in favour of Europeans. Strongest among those not previously visited by missionaries, traders &c. but only in a minor degree in the tribes nearer; To account for this phenomenon, it is only necessary to remember the te[...] scourging to which nearly all the Interior tribes have been [...] in recent years subjected. They have experienced the cruelty[...]s] of the, to the Bechuana, invincible marauders who overran the whole country and they have all heard of their successive repulses by mere handful of whites, and now the most distant are most anxious to secure the friendship of Europeans. The last marauder the notorious Mosilekatse although obliged by the Boors to retire to the Eastern extremity of a lake in the Interior has recently recommenced plundering and the whole country is in a state of alarm. Those who dread him most have the greatest anxiety to obtain alliance with Europeans and this feeling will induce them to receive either missionaries or teachers gladly; Now if we can while this impression lasts confer on them a decided benefit we may hope it will continue. But if we allow this opportunity to pass unimproved it appears to me the time is not far distant when the Interior tribes will be in the same state of indifference & opposition to those nearer. Injurious influences are now in operation to effect this. The Boors of Port Natal have advanced right into the centre of the continent & seized most of the country & the best of the fountains toward

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the North East. These on the one hand, and from this direction, traders Griqua hunters & individuals from the tribes which hate the gospel are every year passing in with more freedom and in many instances they prove curses instead of blessings (a Griqua has during this present year to my knowledge communicated the venereal disease to three tribes amongst whom it was unknown before. One of these has been visited by missionaries but the other two have received one of the worst accompaniments of civilization before the missionaries came to give any of its blessings. This Griqua does not belong to any mission station).

May I beg an early intimation empowering us to make an effort immediately in behalf of the poor ignorant heathen in the Interior if it is accordance with the intentions of the Directors to form a new mission in the Interior. I beg leave to call their attention to a tribe called the Bakhatla the location of which is the best I have seen in the Interior. A large valley with a fountain about equal to this at Kuruman & much more land which by reason of the great [...]ight of the point from which the water comes out, could be irrigated without any expense. Abundance of pasture for cattle with several other fountains at no great distance and a manufacture of iron from ore found in abundance in the adjoining mountains constitute the local attachments. Being a valley however it may be exposed to vicissitudes of temperature, unfavourable to health, but it does not contain anything like the amount of decaying vegetable K. valley does & yet this is a healthy spot. I shall in my next furnish fuller information on this topic David Livingstone

~~Care of Rev^d Dr Phillip Cape Town~~

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Kuruman Dec 22, 1841.
D. Livingstone