

Letter to Henry Drummond, 4 August 1841

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

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Kuruman 4th August 1841

My Dear Brother

Through the gracious care of our Heavenly Father I have at last safely reached this which for a little is to be my resting or rather halting place. I have been ten weeks on this journey but having visited the various missionary institutions lying near our route I have not been more than 2 months in continuous journeying. The oxen are slow paced, resembling much in this respect the common cart horses at home, and then we have such terrible roads it is frequently difficult to get along at all I intend (D.V.) to remain here for about 2 months for the purpose of acquiring a little of the colloquial language and then with the hope of fully mastering the whole I shall proceed to the northward & live excluded from all European society - M^r Edwards of this station intends to accompany me to an extensive population at the distance of about a fortnight or three weeks from this. We shall collect information respecting their state & the state of the surrounding country, and if circumstances are favourable for the formation of a new mission, After two months more, leaving me. He will revisit his family & afterwards return & we shall proceed to the erection of houses &c. This course of exclusion from European society is almost absolutely [necessary] [^] for one beginning the language. I must form my own vocabulary & ~~almost~~ nearly construct my own grammar & I must so mingle with the natives as to learn accurately their mode of thinking or I shall never [be] [^] of much use as a preacher I hear M^r Moffat intends publishing a grammar & dictionary These will be truly invaluable to all future missionaries

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In the mean time I must take the only course left for me, ~~and shall~~ I go forward to mingle in a state of society of which you in Scotland can form but a very faint idea. In the colony & even far beyond it civilization has exerted a powerful influence men & women are ashamed to be seen in a state bordering upon entire nudity but immediately beyond the range of the itineraries of this station you have all living in a state of complete savageism. I have seen several specimens pass through this & really they give me a much better idea of what pure heathenism is than even I possessed before. Bows, arrows

& assagais which in the hands of those under missionary influence seemed puny instruments, now look terrible weapons when bristling around the wild, restless, sparkling eye of the real savage smeared all over with red paint Among these I shall soon take up my abode Do remember me in your prayers that I may be kept faithful into death. And pure amidst awful impurity

We passed through many missionary institutions & were much gratified by much that we witnessed. The churches at home know comparatively little of the success which has attended the labours of missionaries in this country. I always imagined that Miss^s. were in many instances men of sanguine temperament & sent home accounts tinged a little by their wishes but wherever I hav[...] been I have been convinced by actual inspection that the reports have been far within the truth. I grieve that the churches at home are so little acquainted with the eminent success which has attended the preaching of the gospel in Africa. In many places it is truly delightful to behold the Christian deportment of the natives - Their sense of Christian propriety is ~~truly~~ really astonishing. On one occasi[...] we had to travel a long way without water and as it was Saturd[...]

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we hurried on till late ~~at night~~ but failed to reach water that night Both on our own account & for the sake of the oxen we were obliged to travel next morning, Before we had arrived at the water however we were reprov'd by a Bushman for traveling on sabbath. He said it was very wrong to travel on sunday. We explained but it did not seem to satisfy him. Near the spot where we came to the water stood a Bechuana village consisting of about 100 houses. It had a native teacher connected with the Guqua Town mission, had seldom even been visited by a missionary but they hold service regularly in a house appropriated to that purpose & for holding school. After morning service the chief with the native teacher & principal people of the village came & requested an explanation of our conduct. That being given it was next demanded why we had not come to church since we had come early enough for that. We knew not that they had a church but were glad to meet with them in the afternoon. Next morning they purchased many sitchua-na testaments from us. I never saw such thirst for the word of God before. All seemed eager to possess a copy An mighty work is going forward here. & much more might be done were there means for the employment of native agency Believers every where amongst these people preach as soon [...] as they feel the value of the gospel & although they have much oppo[...] to contend against. & no worldly support save what results from[...] own industry they persevere amazingly. The Bechuanas are great retailers of news. Every circumstance that occurs is handed from one to another. They are too, perpetually on the move from one spot to another. We have people here who have come several hundreds of miles from the Interior. This [nomadic]predatory life is very favourable

to the spread of the gospel although it is opposed to the spread of civilization. Ought the churches at home to not take advantage of their predatory newstelling propensities, I think they ought for I [...] it is no uncommon thing for a Bechuana after he has heard a sermon to [...] down among his friends at a distance & relate the whole of [it] [^] word for word. Native agency (I am fully convinced) although it has many evils connectd with it is the only thing that can evangelize the world.

Please to excuse the short note. This opportunity of sending letters is the only one expect to have for a long time & this one is over tomorrow morning. I should have liked much if it had been in my power to write to M^r Kirk & M^r

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M^r Marsmith. Will they favour me with a letter or two? Please tell John & Samuel. I shall consider it a favour to hear from them. I ca[...] now write nor shall I for many many months to come. We have no penny postage here. Give my very kind regards to M^r & M^{rs} Kirk & accept yourself my unfeigned christian regard

D Livingston

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