

Letter to John Naismith, Sr., 2 December 1841

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[0001]

Kuruman 2^d Dec^r 1841

My Dear Brother in the Lord

Knowing that you take a deep interest in everything relating to the extension of the Redeemers kingdom both at home & abroad, and feeling persuaded that the relationship which has existed between us is still sometimes remembered both by you and the Church in Hamilton I have no hesitancy in writing you a short epistle respecting the dark region of the world, a region of which it may truly be said it is the [..] ” ‘land of the’ shadow ‘of death.’” Darkness worse than Egyptian has overspread it And Satan long has retained in undisturbed possession, his seat in it, - I am just now returned from a journey of about 700 miles in length during which I ^ have had ample opportunities of observing the miserable state of the inhabitants in the Interior of the continent and really no words can express their sad condition. Their state now is generally wretched in the extreme and their prospects for the future are as dark as midnight. We visited several tribes, some of whom had never seen a white man except one, an enterpreneuring Scotch trader who a few years ago visited much of the Interior in serach of Ivory &c. One tribe which had lived out of the tract of other traders who have since gone into the country had never beheld a white face so our first intercourse with them was sufficiently amusing and their subsequent kindness, good behavior and the good sense of their chief have quite endeared them to us. Most of the other tribes being accustomed to see traders surrounded our waggons as soon as we approached their towns, commencing begging with all their might, a failing for which generally they Bechuanas are notorious But here the women fled into their houses & the child screamed in terror The men with the chief in the centre were drawn up in line before the town & waited respectfully until we had unyoked & approached them. After salutations He pointed out to us his dignitaries who advanced & formed a semicircle The chief in the centre of it & myself Mr Edwards & myself with two of our , christian natives who accopmanied us in the middle

Thus arranged we sat down on the sand when refreshments were brought of which the chief tasted & then handed over to us. We were quite at home with them all in a minute or two as they knew one of our native Christians, (the son of an ungodly chief) and he explained our objects -
When you write please address me at Kuruman Care of Rev^d D^r Phillip Church Square Cape Town
By the end of next month I hope again to go into the interior ~~with~~ for the purpose of planting two of our bretheren amongst a tribe of their countrymen. I shall remain some time with them. Kind regards to Mrs M.
yours affectly
DL.

[0002]

One of the chiefs having sore eyes I promised him medicine which pleased him so much he never afterwards left my waggon except for the purpose of bringing me beans, porridge or mil[...][k]
We then went to the chiefs house and in passing through to Town the women peeped past their gateways but none of them dared to wait untill we came near, the very dogs stopt me to bark but fled with precipitation as if they had seen a lion or tiger. But before we left we had gained the confidence of all so that both men women & children came & heard the gospel preached by Mr E. & our people without the least appearance of fear. And all behaved with decorum both during sermon & prayer - I feel inclined to say much more about this tribe but forbear in order that I may have a little space to speak concerning the great importance of the churches at home immediately taking possession of these tribes in the name of the Lord. When new islands are discovered by voyagers it is their custom to take possession of them in name of their monarch Now we can take possession of these tribes in a far nobler sense Every church almost might take a tribe under its care for if we can place two native teachers in any of their towns, they being able to keep school & preach in their own simple affectionate manner the message of mercy ~~and theirs~~ I hesitate not to say as much towards th -eir - evange[-] -lization will by the Divine blessing be affected in the first few years as can be expected from the labours of any two Europeans - When we preach to a new people it takes a long time to efface from the native mind an impression that what we teach is nothing else than different customs to which we have become attached "These are just the ways of these foreigners" say they but But when one of themselves tells them of the way of life then their minds are brought more directly in contact with the truth and they are not diverted away from the subject by the peculiar strangeness which

always clings to foreigners in every country - I feel
that I cannot impress your mind with the importance of
having native agents at work amongst these benighted
people so much as I could wish But if you had
beheld with me the vast difference manifested by tribes 24
250 miles Northward and those only 50 ^ distant In the same direction
or 80 to the East & East by North, who have again &
again heard the gospel but amongst whom no regular
systematic operations have yet been begun carried on

[0003]

you certainly would heartily wish that the influences which
have made [...] the surrounding tribes scorers & bitter opponent
of the gospel might not reach those more distant before the
truth has made some "headway" amongst them, near to us
that is, within 100 or 150 miles north & N.E. The people are
visited by traders, Griquas &c who have given diseases but
no remedies either for body or mind and many of them
from having lived at Miss^y Stations know the truth
but have become gospel hardened. But beyond that
they are more free from the contamination of Europeans
more unsophisticated & behave more respectfully to missionaries
They appear to me to be somewhat in the same position as
the natives of newly discovered Islands in the South Seas
of that we had the means to send some of our converts amongst
these people, some ^ here are willing to go and the [...][danger is]
greater wordly disadvantage then what Christians at home
give their money [...] although they give largely. For
£10 is by no means sufficient to support one in this
country. They receive it thankfully as an assistance but
they are still chiefly dependant on other means of support
They have still occasionally to go out & hunt, but in this
they are also useful for some in hunting when they
arrive at villages collect the people & preach to the [...]
I shall speak freely (but privately) to you & I impore you
to try if you with my Dear friends John & Samuel, cannot
somehow or another collect as much as secure a native
Missionary as your representative here in the Interior
As the natives say "my heart asks strongly" for two
But knowing the circumstances of the church I have
not confidence to write them publicly. If you can do anything
more than you are now doing Do think of [...]
Interior of Africa had with John & [...]
as I can. Remember me to M^{rs} J. & S. & to M^r M.. I
know they have love to the cause of Christ and they will
make an effort to help it on here. If you saw my
heart you would excuse me for wanting so urgently and
what I implore you to attempt if possible, I am not
unwilling to attempt myself. By faring hard I fondly hope to

be able to support 1 if not 2 from my salary which is at present such as is no more than sufficient to keep me in the rank of a tradesman at home and I am willing to bear all the fatigue & expense of taking these teachers to their destination. Each journey amounting to about £6

[0004]

I mention these things implicitly believing that they will not go a single step beyond your own family circle & I mention I do not think by way of boasting But I feel so anxious for the object I want to do anything, if anything more than letting you [...] know the real state of the case were necessary to stir you up & provoke you to love & good works I know you dont need it but my heart was speaking the Church here raises annually between £20 & 30 & there is scarcely any money amongst them, most of them are really poor, more so as regards food & clothing than weavers in Hamilton. Yesterday I paid my driver 18 dollars for as wages for the journey which we had first concluded & in which he had endured an immense amount of fatigue. No sooner had he the money in his hand than he walked over to the table where Mr Edwards was sitting & laid down 12 our of the 18 to assist the spread of the gospel. This amongst a people where money is scarce & valuable & amongst a people notorious for niggardliness was cheering to our hearts & this instance is not solitary - That excellent good old man Mr. Hamilton sends his Christian salutation to M^{rs} M. I told him I should tell you about our need of native teachers, ["]O Do said he and just try & let them know the real state of the case" This however is impossible you must see with your own eyes the good that has been effected by these means & the sad state of those who now sit without even the means of enlightenment before you can appreciate fully their great value

[a black stamp that reads "THE" (or something similar) "LETTER", vertically.]
~~Care of Rev^d D^r Phillip Church-square~~
~~Cape Town~~

[an "S"-shape squiggly line]
[a large sideways "8" written over address lines.]
M^r John Naismith, Senior
Leather Merchant
Hamilton
Lanarkshire
N.R.

[Red circle stamp with "1842" encircled]

[Faded red rectangular stamp overlapping red circle stamp]