

Kisuludini Nov. 25, 1854

To the Committee of the Church
Missionary Society

1.

A summary statement by the Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society in East Africa, exhibiting the results of ten years labour, & shewing their present position to be such as entirely subverts the great end of all Missionary Labour, & excluding every prospect of usefulness.

When in the early stages of this Mission the numerous heathen tribes of E.A. were believed to present a hopeful field of Missionary Labour, which in the course of time might be extended to the very centre & even to the far west of this Continent – the experience of ten years labour in combination with recent occurrences clearly demonstrate, that the nature of their whole present condition is such as entirely precludes them from coming under that view.

2.

These heathen-tribes have shewn themselves willing to permit the Missionaries to live among them, not from any desire after the Gospel but solely on account of the presents made to them by the Missionaries.

3.

The Missionaries gave them presents conforming themselves to the custom of the country, & entertaining the hope that after having thus procured a footing in their Countries, their characters as Missionaries would gradually be understood & believed in, & a desire be awakened after instruction.

4.

This hope is annihilated by the simple fact that the Missionaries continue to be entirely disbelieved by the Natives as to the object of their coming among them. They absolutely do not know what to make of them - & their whole condition is such, as indeed renders their belief in this first word of the Missionary "that he came for their sakes and for their good" a moral impossibility. That this general statement is not invalidated by the two instances of conversion among the Wanika is clear from the fact that both were outcasts from Society. The Missionaries are disbelieved as men, how will they be believed as Ambassadors of Christ?

5.

The cause of this moral impossibility of believing the Missionary is partly to be sought in their absolute ignorance about even the existence of Christians, & far less that of Christian teachers, but more especially in the fact, that no immediate access is afforded to any of the heathen tribes of E.A.. An Arab Government, weak & wretched in the extreme, stands between them & the Missionaries. The Natives hear & see that the Europeans are indeed superior not only to themselves but also to the Arabs & the Muhamedans on the coast in general, but notwithstanding this superiority they see those very Europeans as represented by the Missionaries dependant on that government by requiring its permission for coming & staying among them while they themselves in fact though not in name are independent of it. In striving to explain such a strange anomaly the strangeness of which is increased by the liberal presents the Missionaries are giving to their chiefs & kings, taking nothing from them in return – what can be more natural than the construction the Natives put on the appearance of the Missionaries in their countries, viz. that (confounding them as they do with the Portuguese of old) they want to regain possession of territories they formerly occupied, in which supposition they are borne out by the various remains & ruins the Portuguese have left behind them & which are scattered all over East Africa. The Missionaries therefore do not exist among them as Missionaries, but simply as "Wasungu".

6.

The policy of the Arab Government on the East Coast of Africa has been and still is to prevent any Europeans either from visiting or staying on the Continent. The permission granted in spite of this policy to the Missionaries of the C.M.S. to reside on the Continent was only forced from it by the peculiar relation it stood in to England. The Missionaries were thus placed on most dangerous ground, on which the fearful possibility was given of injuring the Government without the slightest intention on their part, by making known (whether mistaken or correct, that does not alter the case) what the government wished to be kept concealed.

7.

This fearful possibility has unfortunately become a reality - & when the Missionaries could never have been objects of pleasure to a government pursuing such a policy, they have now become the object of decided displeasure – not because they are Missionaries & preach the Gospel, for then they might rejoice & take courage – but as causing most serious damage to the revenue. Formerly the Missionaries were, though disliked, at least not prohibited to make journies into the interior, but now it is evident that they would, though not openly, from fear of England, but secretly be opposed. In addition to this it ought to be stated, that the Missionaries started on their former journies at a considerable distance from the seat of Government, which rendered the accomplishment of

Arab intrigues a rather difficult matter, whereas in future if they would penetrate farther into the interior, making their aim Uniamesi, they would be obliged to avail themselves of the roads opposite to Zanzibar, from where Arab ingenuity would find abundant means for carrying out the most secret of plans against men considered injurious to their interest. In justice to the Arab Government it must however be acknowledged that if the Missionaries had confined themselves to their regular Missionary duties among the Wanika, no displeasure would have been incurred from that Government. No formal permission for their travelling had ever been asked for or granted, & the Missionaries thereby not only abused their permission for staying on the continent as teacher, but also exposed themselves in the eyes of the government to the just accusation of dishonesty (& falsehood) in what they first stated to be their only purpose. No wonder therefore that a Government pursuing the policy above stated would tolerate their proceedings only so long as no results dangerous to its interests had made themselves obvious.

8.

This Muhamedan power on the coast thus proves itself a mighty wall of separation between the heathens of E.A. & the Missionaries shutting them out as effectually from their countries as from their hearts. The Missionaries by the very act of stooping to that power infallibly cause themselves to be looked upon as a sort of fugitive or spy, at least as men who do not know what to do with themselves & their riches (for unfortunately the poorest Missionary is still a rich man among the pagans of E.A.). Their doom is therefore fixed as being disbelieved as to the great object of their coming. They become the mere dupes of native beggars – adults will listen to their teaching for a few grains of pepper, not that such thing was ever promised under the conditions of listening, but begging for some trifle or other is the usual termination of it. Boys will learn the alphabet for some ...of cotton cloth. A poor Muhamedan slave will be greeted by these pagans as a „baba“ (father) and „bano“ (master) while both the slave and the pagans will simply call the Missionaries by their surnames; but again the Missionaries will at once be turned into chiefs & kings when any hope is indulged of sharing with them in their indulged riches. The mere fact of the existence of that power as supreme on the coast, is thus seen to destroy all & every influence of the Missionaries among the heathens. Nothing seems to be left them but literary work, but which among people who know nothing of preaching, becomes a most doubtful employment; the more so when it is remembered that there were heathens in other quarters of the globe, who are so far prepared by Providence as to be able at least to distinguish between one European who is a Missionary & another who is not.

9.

This power, though it blocks up the way to the countries & the hearts of the natives in E.A., & stops the progress of the redeemer's Kingdom upon earth,

must nevertheless be looked upon as placed there where it is by the Lord, the Almighty Governor of Nations. It is for Him & Him alone to remove it. His time must be waited. It is He, & not Missionaries nor Missionary Societies, who in His universal government in which even the most wicked Boers & the most cruel slave dealers must serve Him, prepared a field for Missionary labour in the South & West of this Continent - & the Missionaries firmly believe that He will do the same in the East. East Africa too, is first to be crushed & laid low by his mighty arm, & then, & only then it will present a field for Missionary labour. The same Divine law that existed for the Saviour of the World "to come unto His own" in order to fulfill His mission of grace & truth, seems also to exist for the Christian Church. Missions in foreign countries seem to prosper only according to the degree, in which Christian Power has been extended.

10.

The continuation of this Mission is thus put into question – in answer to which the Missionaries are prepared to state that though they will depart with reluctant feelings from a people whose language they have learnt to speak & whom they would gladly teach the way of Salvation still feel themselves bound in duty to their Society & to the more general interests of the Kingdom of God, wherever it may be, to express their willingness of being removed to any other field of the Society's Miss.-labour. But at the same time they would also intimate their readiness to resume their labour in E.A. as soon as by the Providence of God a change will have been wrought in its whole political & social condition.

The Missionaries of the
Church Mission Society in Eastern Africa
J. Rebmann
James Erhardt

