

Fred Stanley Arnot

Frederick Stanley Arnot was born in Glasgow, Scotland, on September 12, 1858. For a number of years, his family lived close to the David Livingston family in near-by Hamilton. This experience made a deep and lasting impression on young Arnot, who from an early age developed an interest in the continent where his “hero” was a missionary and explorer. Arnot spent a lot of time at the Livingstone home looking at the explorer’s various maps and artifacts in the attic and, as a boy, he determined to go to Central Africa and follow in Livingston’s footsteps with the Gospel. He left school at fourteen to undergo an apprenticeship as a joiner in the local shipyards in order to learn



the practical skills that he believed would be essential for his future work as a missionary, but he did not set sail for Africa until July 1881, just two months before his 23rd birthday. He labored in and for Africa until his death, in Johannesburg on May 14, 1914. He spent 33 years and traveled 30,000 miles to bring the Gospel to perishing sinners. One man who heard him preach said that “[his] words pierce the heart.” King Lewanika of Barotseland, (largely located in what is now western Zambia), had many talks with Arnot. At first, he did not want Arnot to teach his people the Word of God; he was particularly upset at the truth that a mere slave could become saved and “be seated in the palace of God,” while a king or chief could be shut out.

Arnot reminded Lewanika that the words were not man’s words but God’s. Eventually the king relented and allowed him to preach the Gospel. Where did Arnot derive his love for souls and this great truth – that a mere slave could be saved and in Heaven forever?

The verse God used to reach Arnot himself sheds light on that question: it was John 3:16. Arnot was saved as a boy. He and a friend had taken fruit from a neighbor’s garden. From an upstairs window, his friend’s older brother saw them and called them thieves. Arnot realized he had sinned against God. The next day, with thoughts of his guilt still in his mind, he passed by the Hamilton prison. To his horror he saw a policeman leading a little boy to prison. In his other hand the policeman held a pair of new boots which the barefooted little boy had stolen. Fred felt that he was much more wicked than that little needy boy. He described the results of this early conviction of sin: “I dreaded to pass another night; I could not tell anyone what a wicked boy I was. I knew I ought to tell God about it, but I trembled to do so at my usual evening prayer, so I waited until all were in bed and the house quiet, then up I got. Now, I thought, I will ask God to forgive me, but words would not come, and, at last, I burst into a flood of tears. I felt I was too wicked even for God to forgive; yet a glimmer of light and hope came to me with this thought: ‘That is why Jesus died on the Cross for me, because I am so wicked.’ Among many texts of Scripture that my parents had taught me was John 3:16. I repeated it to myself on my knees. *It was 2 AM, and that ‘whosoever’ took me in.* I awoke next day with a light heart, the burden was gone.”



FREDERICK STANLEY ARNOT

Commended by an assembly of believers that gathered to the Lord's name, Arnot went to Africa in 1881. He was the missionary who, followed David Livingstone into Central Africa

and was one of the very early pioneers who was instrumental in opening up that continent to future missionaries, explorers, and traders. In addition, he laid the foundation for a highly successful Christian endeavor in the broad strip of the continent that runs from Angola, through the southern Congo, north-western Zambia, and into Katanga and beyond: an area of Africa that became known to succeeding generations as the "Beloved Strip." In particular, it was the work of Frederick Stanley Arnot that opened up the hinterland of Angola and that part of the Congo through which the Benguela Railway was eventually to run.

In later years, ill health dogged him, and after seven more years mostly on his own, he handed his work over to Dan Crawford and others. He made several other major central African journeys, planning and helping to open new missions stations but he was forced by recurrent malaria to base himself in Johannesburg.

J. Keir Howard writes: "Early in 1914, Arnot had set his heart on revisiting the area around the confluence of the Kabompo and Zambezi Rivers in modern northwest Zambia. He visited the area with two other missionaries who were looking for a

suitable site for a new mission station and he was able to assist them, but he soon became seriously ill and had to be taken back to Johannesburg where he died on May 14, 1914." Perhaps the finest tribute to him came from Sir Ralph Williams, later to become Governor of Newfoundland from 1909-1913. Williams had met Arnot at the Victoria Falls in 1884. He felt that Arnot was a remarkable man and wrote:

"He was the simplest and most earnest of men ... I have seen many missionaries under varied circumstances, but such an absolutely forlorn man, existing on from day to day, almost homeless, without any of the appliances that make life bearable, I have never seen. He was imbued with one desire and that was to do God's service ... And I have honored recollections of him ever since as being as near his Master as anyone I ever saw."

Arnot had little education but nevertheless became a prolific writer in the cause of missions. His great gift was to lead and inspire others and he was **utterly** dedicated to his understanding of what God had called him to do. He was awarded a fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society for his journeys on the Zambezi-Congo watershed.

