

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona Mission, P. O. Delfkom
Via Piet Retief
Feb. 5th, 1941

Dear Highway Friends:

In two of my recent letters I have mentioned baptizing Shangaans. I feel that you should know something more about this race of people.

The Shangaans are a race of black people very closely related to the Zulus. Some believe they are an offshoot of the latter race. The similarity of their languages seems to bear this out. Although Shangaans are found in the Eastern Transvaal their recognized home is in the portion of Portuguese East Africa known as Gazaland.

Shangaan men and boys come into the Transvaal to work in wattle tree plantations and the gold and coal mines. They seem to be particularly adapted to these types of work as they are willing to stay away from their homes and wives longer than some other blacks. They also are willing to work harder and do not seem to be afraid of working underground in the mines.

The Shangaans, we are beginning to work among, are in Alfred Metula's section, beyond Paulpietersburg from Hartland; they work at cutting down wattle trees and peeling their bark. Most of them work at piece work and are paid about 12 cents for each 200 pounds of fresh bark.

The men live in round huts with walls three or four feet high. In this section the huts or rondavals are built of poles, thatched with grass and plastered inside with mud. Home-made chairs and tables seem to be fairly common among them and they like rice, high seasoning and European vegetables, besides the usual native food.

For the most part these transplanted Shangaans live in villages or compounds without their wives as the Portuguese government does not allow them to take their wives along with them permanently for fear they will not return to their native land. Of course some of the men pick up temporary wives among the Zulus but these are left behind when they return home.

One of our recent converts testified that he had been away from his home for over eleven years. Up until he was converted he had no money to send home or even buy good clothes as he spent all his money on beer and other equally worthless things. He said he now was able to buy clothes and knew what it was to have a five cent piece or a "tickey" in his pocket.

The Shangaans seem to be greatly given to demon worship. One of our converts spoke about throwing away a bracelet of beads he used to wear; it represented his "demon girl," which he worshipped. Another told about carrying around a black and a white cloth that represented his demon. It appears that he tied these cloths wherever he had a pain; the demon was supposed to cure him or take away his pain.

It seems to be much easier to get the Shangaan men to accept Christianity than the Zulu men. Even after thirty-five or more years of missionary work among the Zulus we only have a handful of men church-members besides the preachers. Within a period of less than a year we have baptized six Shangaans.

I have been told that it is very difficult for

Protestant missions to establish work in Portuguese East Africa due to the opposition of official Catholicism. Among the few Protestant missions that have work among these people are the Nazarenes. I understand that they have a very flourishing work among them.

Last Sunday we made one of our first Shangaan converts an Ijoini, the equivalent of an Exhorter. We trust that he may develop into one of our native preachers. He is able to read and speak Zulu as well as his own language.

If this work among the Shangaans continues to grow, we are praying that the Lord will put it on some of your hearts to take up the support of a part or full-time native worker among them. If you could have heard the joyous, definite testimonies of these new converts you would have been as thrilled as I was. Pray for them.

EUGENE A. M. KIERSTEAD

Altona Mission, P. O. Delfkom
Via Piet Retief
Feb. 4th, 1941

Dear Highway Friends:

Brother George Sanders and I have just returned from a four day itinerary in my old car. We covered over 200 miles during the round trip.

We left home Friday and were to have met Brother Charles Sanders about five miles out of Paulpietersburg, instead we found him in Paulpietersburg. We then met the train and got the Grootspuit teacher. Just before that we picked up the Mkupane teacher. The two teachers, a native worker, we three missionaries and much luggage make a full load.

On our way to Mkupane we called to see the tenant-farmer (European) of the farm on which we have a small school and church services, to see if we could not get permission to build a wattle-and-daub church and school-house. The tenant-farmer gave us a letter to take to the real owner.

Arriving at Mkupane an afternoon service. The children (native) had a belated Christmas tree beforehand. We had a nice service both then and late in the evening. The latter part of the evening service was occupied in singing down and talking down a young man who called himself a Zionist and who wanted to hold the floor and pour forth a veritable stream of Scripture mixed with a very unorthodox interpretation and fantastic notions. The native worker and others soon exposed and silenced him.

After the service we went to the Grootspuit outpost, arriving very late. We slept in our native worker's house on beds. We remained with him until we went to Hartland Sunday afternoon.

Saturday morning we went to Paulpietersburg to meet the Hartland teacher. We found he had arrived earlier than he had planned and was already several hours along the road walking.

On returning to Grootspuit we had lunch and then set out to have an afternoon service with our new Shangaan converts. We had a most inspiring service. We were well blessed in our souls. After the service these Shangaan men treated us to a fine supper of roast chicken, rice, potatoes tomatoes, bread and tea.

Brother Charles, the native workers and I spent the evening until after eleven o'clock examining ten candidates for baptism. Brother George led the night service in the church.

He said the church was nearly full. The service ran from about eight o'clock until four o'clock Sunday morning. How would you like to sit that long? One Shangaan man gave himself to seek the Lord.

Much of Sunday morning was spent discussing outpost problems with the workers. Later I baptized ten candidates, six men and four women, or six Zulus and four Shangaans. Brother Charles gave these the right hand of fellowship and administered communion. In the afternoon service, which lasted from mid-day until after four, nine men and boys chose to follow the Lord. Praise His name!

Evening found three happy but tired missionaries arriving at Hartland, about 30 miles away.

After a short visit with the MacDonalds, George and I loaded up our car with bags of corn, fruit, etc., and set out for Altona. On our way we had two interviews, one about a native teacher and the other with the Mkupane farm owner about the church site I have already mentioned. In Moolman we loaded on a bag of flour and a package of school books. Filling up with gasoline we continued our journey. 8 o'clock found us stopped in the dark about 100 yards from the Mission with a flat tire. We were not long in changing tires, reaching the house, unloading, eating, and getting into bed.

Thus ended a long, strenuous, but blessed four days of working for the Master. Good-night and God bless you.

Yours for service,
EUGENE A. M. KIERSTEAD

A WORD FITLY SPOKEN

Dr. Cuyler once visited Scotland and made diligent search for someone who had known Robert Murray McCheyne. Finally one old man was brought forward. "Can you tell me," asked Dr. Cuyler, "some of the texts of McCheyne?" And the old man made reply, "I don't remember them." "Then can you tell me some sentences that he used?" And again the reply was, "I have entirely forgotten them." Then said Dr. Cuyler, "Well, don't you remember anything about him at all?" "Ah!" said the man, "that is a different question. I do remember something about him. When I was a lad by the wayside playing one day McCheyne came along and, laying his hand on my head, said, 'Jamie, lad, I am away to see your poor sick sister,' and then looking into my eyes, he said, 'And, Jamie, I am very concerned about your own soul.' I have forgotten his texts and his sermons, Dr. Cuyler, but I can still feel the tremble of his hand and I can see the tear in his eye."—Selected.

A LOVE FOR SOULS

It is a marvel to me how men continue at ease in preaching year after year without conversions. Have they no bowels of compassion for others? No sense of responsibility upon themselves? Dare they, by a vain misrepresentation of divine sovereignty, cast the blame on their Master? Or is it their belief that Paul plants and Apollos waters, and that God gives no increase? Vain are their talents, their philosophy, their rhetoric, and even their orthodoxy without the signs following. How are they sent of God who bring no men to God? Prophets whose words are powerless, sowers whose seed all withers, fishers who take no fish, soldiers who give no wounds.—Spurgeon.