

JOHN KING, THE APOSTLE OF SURINAM.*

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The history of John King is so unique and his conversion so forcible an illustration of the possibility of the direct and immediate operation of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and consciences of the heathen, that it appears worthy of a wider notice than has hitherto been accorded to it.

This brief sketch purposes to set forth, in their order, the facts of the life of John King, as they are reported by the Moravian missionaries of Surinam, whose veracity no one questions. Dutch Guiana is hemmed in between British and French Guiana, and covers a territory of some sixty thousand square miles, of which all but one fifteenth part is an unexplored and impenetrable wilderness.

The sources of the Surinam are still veiled in mystery, and explorers are deterred by the deadly malaria of the upper-river regions. The mixed population of Dutch Guiana is estimated at about sixty thousand, exclusive of some eighteen thousand bush negroes and an uncertain number of Indians.

These bush negroes are the descendants of runaway slaves, and they inhabit the dense jungles of the interior. There are three tribes of them—the Aukanians, the Saramaccans, and the Bekon or Moesinga. All have lapsed into complete heathenism, but there are some traces of a former connection with Christianity. As chief god they worship Gran-Gado (great God), whose wife is Maria, and whose son is Jesi Kist. They are, however, polytheists, and worship forest gods, water gods, air gods, etc.

The country they inhabit is called by themselves *the land of the shadow of death*. The climate, especially in the rainy season, is pestilential, and the swift and turbulent rivers are practically unnavigable.

In the heart of the maiden forest, on the banks of the Saramacca, lies the village of Maripastoon, and here the Lord called and ordained John King for the special work for which He had destined him.

When the Moravian missionary Calker, in 1869, represented his Guianan field at the General Synod, he read a curious epistle of John King, which in part runs as follows :

“I, John King, your humble servant, whom the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has given in your hands, send to all the great masters and their wives my heartfelt greetings. I am John King, whom the Lord Jesus at Maripastoon has raised from the sleep of death. It was there that, in the midst of other heathen, the Holy Spirit began to work so powerfully in me that often I did not know where I was. At that time all, even my sisters, considered me a miscreant. No one would have anything to do with

* The French religious press tells an interesting story concerning the work of an unknown and humble servant of Christ, who, by his untiring labors in a well-nigh hopeless environment, has earned the title of *apostle of Dutch Guiana*.