

Leo Dielingen*

Christianity and Traditional African Religion in Surinam and Dutch Speaking Areas in the Caribbean

In this paper I will be referring mainly to Surinam, once the greatest colony of the Dutch in the Western Hemisphere. Surinam, which is four times as big as the Netherlands, has a population of less than a half a million. But its population is very varied. This is due to the fact that it is made up of peoples from all over the world. So quite easily we can call Surinam "a Lilliput edition of the world." When you visit Paramaribo (the capital of Surinam with more than 100,000 people), you will be struck by the great variety of races and dress, which you will see, and by the languages you will hear. As you get to know the country better, you will notice the variety of religions and cultures, manners and customs. Another thing which you will likely notice is that in spite of the military coup (1980-1987), the Surinamese carry a certain amount of good-naturedness and heartiness with them.

This fascinating part of the former colony of the Dutch kingdom is not known as much in the Netherlands as the Surinamese would like. That is why I want to try to take a closer look at the Black part of this mixed population, as this is the theme of our conference.

Discovery

After the discovery of America by Columbus in 1492, it was not until the turn of the century that the Northern coast of South America was

*Pastor, Hernut Church, a predominantly Surinamese congregation in Lage Weg, The Netherlands.

discovered. In 1500 Pincon set foot on the shore of Guyana, of which Surinam is a part. Because of its inhospitality the Spanish named it the "Wild Coast." It was only inhabited by Indians or "Redskins" who belonged to various tribes, e.g., Surinen, Arawaks, Caribs and Warrows. The country (Surinam) is probably named after the Surinen. It is quite a while before we hear from the countries again, until it becomes known that Guyana has gold. Then the dam broke: many Europeans caught the infectious gold fever. There was even a rumor of an Indian King called "El Dorado" (the gilded), who bathed every morning in the Parima Lake, the banks of which were made up of pure gold dust! In this manner the Europeans came to Surinam: first the Spanish, then the English and the French, and much later in 1667 the Dutch. El Dorado proved to be a myth, and the settlers had to work hard to stay alive.

They settled in Surinam in the first half of the 17th century. Their assets and knowledge of tropical cultivation contribution much to the growth of the colony. For the work on the plantations, workers were required. At first the Indians were used. But these nomads appeared to be unfit for the regular work. The hard and unusual work which they had to do, the unknown diseases which they suffered and the alcohol to which they became addicted caused great mortality among them. Having pity on the suffering of the Indians, the priest Las Casas unfortunately proposed that Negroes from Africa could better be used for the plantation work. His well meant advice, which will at all times be condemned by humanity, led to the degrading slave trade which lasted for a few centuries.

Slave Trade

The Negroes were collected from the West Coast of Africa, packed together in slaveships and sold in public on the slavemarkets. They were seen as property of the slavemasters and had no rights. Jurisdictionally,

they were classified under the commodity law. Physical punishment was regular and most of the slaves had a wretched fate; luckily some slaves had a better time.

It should be of no surprise that many slaves sought refuge in the impenetrable jungles of Surinam. These refugees, called "Maroons," often came from their hiding, ransacked the plantations and retreated again to their fortified camps. It cost the slavemasters a lot of money and many human lives to fight against these Maroons. The Maroon descendants, estimated at a figure of over 30,000, today are the "Bushnegroes." Together with 5,000 Indians, they live in the jungles and make up the primitive peoples of Surinam, who are hardly aware of a 20th century civilization.

Attempts At Colonization

Over the years, in order to solve the question concerning a good labor force for the plantations, attempts were made at colonization. Well known is the B.B.C. attempt of 1845. Under the leadership of Benting, Brandhoff and Copijn a few Dutch farming families were brought over to Surinam. The experiment failed because of poor organization. The descendants of these colonists still go by typical Dutch names like: Van Dijk, Van Ravenswaay, Gummels, Stolk, etc. In colloquial language they are called "Boeren"; economically they are mainly preoccupied with vegetables and stockbreeding.

Abolishment of Slavery

Meanwhile the many cries for the abolishment of slavery became louder and louder. Already in 1808 slavery was officially abolished, though illegally many slaves were still being brought into the country. A practice such as slavery obviously did not comply with the liberal views which were beginning to catch on in Europe in the 19th century. In 1832 slavery was

abolished in the English colonies, and in 1878 in the French. For Surinam this emancipation sadly came only in 1863, when freedom was given to about 33,000 slaves. This memorable happening currently is still being celebrated by the Creoles, (as the descendants of the freed slaves are now officially called). The freed Negroes were still under supervision of the state during a period of ten years.

The transition from slave to free human being was made easier. Another hope went with this: namely, that in this manner the emancipated ones would remain in agriculture. This hope would remain idle. The majority of the Creoles turned their backs to farming and settled in the capital Paramaribo; there they earned their living with all different types of handiwork.

There are now about 100,000 Creoles. A strong differentiation has taken place among them, and you will find them also in the industrial and intellectual professions.

Christianity in Surinam

The "West-Indische Compagnie" (the West-Indian Company) also introduced Christianity. The employees of the West-Indische Compagnie (especially the "Zeeuwen" and the "Hollanders," people from the southern and northern [coastal] regions of Holland, respectively, were members of the Dutch Reformed Church then, for whose spiritual care the Compagnie appointed clergymen. A Dutch church historian, Prof. Dr. J. M. Van De Linde, speaks in his dissertation of the "Hollandse Handelskerke" (the Dutch Trade Churches) when writing about the churches which came about in Surinam; more so because the Dutch Reformed Church occupied itself exclusively with her own Dutch people and ignored the autochthonous and imported population, the Negro slaves.

But in the 18th century the monopoly of the Reformed Church was broken by the arrival of a few Moravian brethren, the "Herrnhutters," who

set foot on land in 1735 and some Franciscan missionaries. What is important to know is that the Negro slaves took along with them from Africa their spiritual heritage, in spite of the hard journey which they had to make by boat. Their religion you can describe as: Animism.

The Gods and Man

The world of the Negro on the whole is a world full of gods and spirits. Gods in that world are the manifested spirits; gods and spirits are two names for one and the same thing; namely, of worship or fear! All "gados" (gods; sing.: "gado") are invisible beings, too high above man for any human eye to see. One who was making an idol said that he had no idea of how the god really looked, and so he could not give a proper shape to its face. Even so, the wooden idol was just a resting place for the spirit of the god and not the god itself (Van Lier "Samenleving in een Grensgebied"). This goes especially for the Bushnegro's world, which does not mean that the Negro living in the city or in the districts have a godfree world. While the Supreme God has no contact with man, the gods take an important place in the religious life of the Negro. For example, various tribes of the Bushnegroes believe that the gods deliberate with each other on man's weal and woe, and that is why great feasts should be organized at certain times when one tries to get in favor with the gods. According to Van Lier the Djoekas (as the Bushnegroes are also called) discern between "tapoesei" (living in the air), "ondro watra" (living in the water), "boesi" (living in the jungle) and "groing" (living in or on the ground around and near the villages) and those gados living on the agricultural grounds. If man wants to have a good life, then at all times he should reckon with the gados. This belief puts a great pressure on life.

Where Are The Gods Present?

(A conspicuous stone attracts attention where it lies or through its spiral form.) Van Lier states: "A little tree or branch which has grown with a

twitch in it, is a 'tra soortoe sani' (a deviation from nature), and in the twitch lives a gado." Next, when one comes near a dangerous rapid or waterfall (the name of such is not easily pronounced), one will never naturally relieve oneself there. When entering the mouth of a creek a Bushnegro will bring a little offering or say a little prayer. Every river or creek has its own place for offerings. It is assumed that the gados eat and drink, but especially that they are married. If you say to a Djoeka, "But I do not see that a gado has eaten the offered meat," he will then answer "Joe no kan si a njam ing na kraka" ("You cannot see it, he eats in the spirit." Van Lier). When he moors his boat somewhere, he will also perform a religious act. When clearing the jungle for an agricultural field, or for a village, certain acts have to be performed for the "gronmann," the god of that piece of land; even when building huts.

The world of the Bushnegro is not his world, but that of the gods. When he wants to use that world, for example, to cultivate it, then he has to turn to the gods and make contact with them. Mind you, this contact does not occur for the gods, because in everything man is the central focus. Man offers libation in order to catch a lot of fish. At the quay he performs religious acts so that no harm or danger will befall him. He says a prayer before the waterfall so that he will get through it unharmed. When preparing the agricultural grounds, he does not pray to thank the deity. Instead he prays that no accidents will happen when cutting the trees. Through the many religious practices he wants to get land, which is not his, to use for his own purposes. He gives to receive; the "do ut des" principle. All actions are thus anthropocentrically determined and orientated. Because he wants to make the world fit for living, he will refrain from killing certain beasts in which gods are manifested. Among these sacred beasts are various sorts of snakes like the boa constrictor ("papa sneki"). It is said that snakes, which are killed, come alive again to take revenge.

Various plots in Paramaribo have a god in the form of a snake; the best thing to do in that case is to leave the snake to its own, because He can

be the gronmama of the plot. The habit still exists that before you take a drink you spill some out of the bottle on the ground for the gronmama.

Dirty soapy water people will not easily spill on the ground. On the plots live offerings were and are being made at certain times of the year, especially around New Year. By the old wells, which existed on most plots in former days, gods lived.

The meeting place of the gods and man in the interior of Surinam is preeminently by the "fragatiki" (frag=flag; tiki=stick) or by the "gado-pau" (god-post). In every village you will find such a shrine. The fragatiki has a cross form, formed by two wooden sticks; over the full length of the cross beam/stick hangs a long white piece of cloth. According to Van Lier, this is the symbol of what is above. Around the fragatiki is a square box filled with earth. On this square they place various offerings every day. Usually a fragatiki is planted by a deity, a meeting hall or in front of the house of the spirits of the ancestors. The fragatikis are the homes of the small gods. Pious people always have a shrine around their home where little flags have been put into the ground. Also at the mouths of creeks and rivers, which one often enters, at the beginning of a hunting trail or at the entrance of an agricultural plot, there is always such a "begiplesi" (place of prayer). There you will see sticks with ribbons stuck into the ground, and often there is a sort of chair or table on which the food and drink offerings for the gado and his family can be placed. From this we may conclude that the fragatiki is one of the most important elements in the religion of the Bushnegro; the whole of his life is imbued in his religion. His culture and expressions thereof are also connected with these views of god(s). Put differently: with "Animism" as it is found in the innerpart of Surinam, it is not easy to separate religion and culture.

"Obia": What Actually Makes An Obia

This concerns a recipe which must be prescribed as accurately as possible for it to help. A simple obia can consist of a few eggs, feathers, hair,

akansa (cornmeal kneaded into a cake, usually wrapped in a banana leaf), or a bottle of sweet wine with a red ribbon bound around its neck and a few coins put around a bottle. Such an obia can be put in various places, e.g., on the corner of certain streets, above the entrance of a home. An obia can also be a golden ring or earring. Obias are placed near court because people believe that this will have a positive effect on the accused and the decision of the judge.

Function of the Obia: Obia As "Tapoe"

Tapoe literally means to close; in essence: that which serves to guard one against something evil. In Surinam tapoes are used to serve a variety of purposes such as: Tapoes against the evil intentions of a fellowman; tapoes against evil spirits (yorka), which people send for you; tapoes against snakebites. Here the function of the tapoe is a defensive one; to guard against or to make harmless the evil.

Opo literally means open. (Here it means to get something). An opo makes a good opening; to get a nice job, to become a great manager. A woman can use an opo and hope it will let her manage her husband (kroooi). You have trading-opos, hunting-opos, opos to make it impossible for the police to arrest the owner of the opos. It is taken for granted that when somebody really has an opo that the police cannot do anything to the person. The opo allows the police no chance of doing anything.

According to Van Lier the name obia is used with the Bushnegroes for lower gods or spirits, but also to refer to medicine or contraceptives. One of the obis which takes a very important place in all this are the herbal bathings. By "wass-obia" (bathing in an herbal bath and afterwards being smeared with white clay), the Djoeka becomes immune against all sorts of evil that another person would like to do to him.

During the obia baths, the patient is not allowed to have intercourse. Women do not use obia baths for this reason; they take them when sick

or barren. O. J. R. Jozefzoon says that the obia is viewed by the Saramacans as wisdom and strength which the gods have given to the Negroes to help them survive in life.

Van Lier thinks that the manningre-obias are obias meant especially for the adult men. The obias help men in sickness. So obia can become a synonym for the art of healing. Usually the faster healings are indeed the result of the use of herbs.

Skin diseases (even forms of Lepra), cutting wounds and fever are often cured by obia. The Bushnegroes' mode of treating leg fractures is sometimes very complicated. The most complicated fractures can be healed in about fourteen days. Certain forms of insanity are also healed by it.

Behind the obia is a big and mighty spirit world. The man who masters this world is the obiaman, who also gives the recipes for the obias. To be able to do this, he first has to get into contact with the "kromantigado" who cares for man and beast. When there is an epidemic, then his help is called for to fight the sickness, and many offerings are brought for him. That is why the kromanti lives in a continuous struggle with the ampoeka, the god of evil sicknesses and destruction.

When the obiaman goes into ecstasies (in the Surinam language: *winti*), he then speaks a language that is called *kromanti* which cannot be understood by non-initiates. It is said that the language was taken out of Africa. Through this language the obiaman is told what should and what should not be done; he thus gets the recipe. The obiaman is also used for tracing and investigating. He can also establish the cause of one's death.

Ancestor Worship: "Grantata-Cultus"

The worship of the ancestors has its focal point in the *grantata* cult. *Grantata* literally means grandfather or ancestor. This cult has a visible center where the *gran-yorkas* (the spirits of the ancestors) gather. Van Lier gives the following explanation of the *grantata*:

“It is a collection of relics, such as hair, nails, blood-stained pieces of cloth from the men who fell in battle, etc. Also seeds and wool from the first cotton plant which they planted, from which they were able to weave the clothes “foe tapoe sjem” (to cover up the personal parts). These objects have been wrapped together in a piece of cloth, and have been attached to a board. Tradition has it that grantata was transported from Africa to Surinam by a priest initiated into all the secrets of his service. This priest trained his male successors, who had the gift for this service.

The ‘granman’ (chief/head) is the high-priest of the grantata cult. In the Djoeka tribe the grantata forms the center of life. It is included in everything. It protects its adherents in all that they do. During the flight from slavery the grantata helped. This form of ancestor worship, which was first found only with the Djoeka tribe, has spread to the other Bushnegro tribes.

Similarities Between the Grantata Cult in Surinam and Africa

In Surinam the ancestral worship has its focus in the grantata and in Africa it is focused on the golden chair (with some tribes); these are symbols of the cult. In both Surinam and in Africa this cult is the state religion in the sense that the chief (in the interior of Surinam) is also high-priest at the same time. So there is little or no difference; the contents of the worship is the same, the form a bit different.

On Death and Ancestors

It is believed that the spirits of the ancestors keep on living, and that you have to reckon with them. It is customary that on the eighth day

a table is placed behind the house of the deceased. On the table are chocolate milk and corn pellets which have been prepared in sugar. In some families it is quite a meal. The *yorka* of the deceased comes to eat it — thus goes the belief — while inside the people sing or tell stories about the spider. On the graves offerings are brought for the *yorkas* (often in secret, as others are not allowed to see this). Usually the obiaman leads in this. Proper practice should consist of regular offerings for the ancestors, if one wants to stay in favor with them. In this belief dreams play an important part. In the dream contact is established between the ancestors and the descendants. Here you will find the care of the deceased for the descendants. This phenomenon has deep roots in the spiritual life of the Negro.

Mission

The encounter between Christ's salvation and the West African religion can be divided into various periods in Surinam.

1. The Anglican Church (1650-1668)

At the end of the 17th century the English settled in Surinam. With them came the English state-church: the Church of England. The ecclesiastical instruction was: "the public exercise of religion according to the liturgy, forms and ceremonies of the Church of England." From this commission one can gather that it did not occur to the church to get into and give herself to the Surinamese society. She wanted to set her own ecclesiastical structure as norm. She did not put salvation in the middle of the world, but in the middle of Anglicanism. That is why she only took care of the English in Surinam. The Negro slaves were not in the picture of the English church. When the English left Surinam, their church left with them.

2. Reformed and Lutheran Churches

As seen earlier, these churches felt responsible only for the Dutch slaveowners and slavemasters. These churches totally isolated themselves and looked after their own Dutch people in Surinam. From the fact that the church was so little oriented towards mission we can gather that the clergy refused to learn "Negerengels," the language that had developed out of the various languages which were spoken in Surinam at that time.

Still, it was in 1747 that the first Negro slave, Benjamin, was baptized in the Dutch Reformed Church after he had received biblical teaching in Dutch. Concerning this issue, the late Bishop Herman Steinberg remarks in his book, *Ons Suriname*, that such cases did not change the fact that the church did not see the preaching of the gospel to the 'local' people as her task.

Amongst the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church there were some positive exceptions, men who saw that their apostolic task was greater than what the colonists expected of them, such as J. Kals in the 18th century and Boekhout in the 19th, who preached in Negerengels in 1846. A request to appoint Boekhout as an assistant preacher met denial by the governor. Up until today this church does not use the Negerengels' language. Non-members and other Christians rightly talk about the bakra-kerki (the church of the whites); in other words the "neat" church.

In general, the members of this church are lighter in color than the members of the Moravian Church. Professor Dr. J. M. Van de Linde says of these churches: "The Reformed and Lutheran Churches did not concern themselves with the Negro slaves and undertook no attempts to converse with the people. They left the field of mission totally to the Moravian and the Roman Catholic Churches. The Reformed and Lutheran Churches remained the churches of the White masters. Later, the more educated colored persons and a tiny group of Blacks joined them. But until this day the common people do not feel at home in these churches."

3. The Roman Catholic Mission

From 1683 to 1686 three Franciscan priests worked in Paramaribo. After a request from the settled Roman Catholic planters, Governor Aarsen Van Sommeldijck allowed this settlement. In these first attempts the African people were not kept in mind. These priests died quite quickly.

The second attempt was 1785-1795 when Wichers was governor. Permission was granted to hold church services and priests were allowed in; however, the baptism of slaves was not allowed in order to build a church. Priests, monks and nuns had to wear civilian clothes. Later, permission was granted that only freed slaves could be baptized. In 1793 the Roman Catholic Church had amongst its members only one female slave. This attempt had also to be abandoned.

The third attempt, 1810-1812, the Franciscan priest Schink started a congregation, printed a catechism, and was allowed to start a school in 1811. He tried to get the slaves free so that they could be baptized. The fourth period was 1817-1825. The Constitution of 1816 granted the Roman Catholic Church freedom. Yet she was only allowed to work among the freed slaves. In 1856 education was taken over by the Franciscan nuns. The congregation of Redemptorists became responsible for the missionary work. Today the mission has schools and boarding schools for the Negroes; she has been able to plant mission stations in the jungles of Surinam. In this way Rome was able to serve the West Africans in Surinam.

The mission also tried to improve the conditions under which the Negroes lived. Yet it is a fact that in most parishes in Surinam the clergy and the religious are 99% foreigners. Abbenhuis, himself a Roman Catholic redemptorist, writes: "Yet little has been done to accommodate in areas of culture or society. Church buildings, music, adornment, theatre, singing, clothing as well as charity remained stylistically Dutch. Catechism and the form of preaching were not tuned to the people; they continued in the manner of the Dutch forms of education." He continues, "It remains an indisputable

fact to the people, that the influence of the missionary attempts would have been much deeper if there had been more knowledge and thus more recognition of the wisdom of the people concerning handed-down philosophies of life, and forms of living, more knowledge of social relations, of clan-law and family-law, of the philosophical and religious understanding of their own African leaders and former leaders, and more knowledge of the historical development of Surinam."

4. The Salvation Army

The first task of the Salvation Army was to engage in evangelism and social work. It is customary with the Army to evangelize on the street corners. Its membership is quite small, but the aim of its founder was not to found churches, but to show the non-believers the way to the church of Jesus Christ.

5. The Baptists

The Baptists engage in street evangelism and have some small scale schoolwork going on, as does the Methodist Church.

6. The Labadists

Named after Jean de Labadie, some members settled during the time of Governor Van Sommelsdijck. Three sisters of the governor belonged to this group. They wanted to meet with the West African people but unfortunately their work left little fruit. Every well-intended attempt of the Labadists was misunderstood. In 1732 they closed down their settlement.

The church historian F. Staelin sees the Labadists as a kind of forerunner of the Moravian Brethren (Herrnhutters) in Surinam.

7. The Seventh Day Adventist Church in Surinam

As a religious movement, Adventism began with a widespread "awakening" on the question of the "second advent," or second coming of Jesus Christ, which developed spontaneously in Europe and in the New World in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Adventist theology in general, according to the *Handbook of Protestant Denominations*, 1980, is a Christian faith that is based upon the conviction that the second advent of Jesus Christ is the only hope of the world. Adventists hold that human nature is fallen because of sin and that on the basis of neglect or rejection of God's plan of salvation those rebellious against the government of God will be ultimately destroyed; while believers, by God's grace, will be saved. After the cataclysmic event, Jesus Christ will reign in triumph through a 1,000 year period of millennium, according to Revelation 20:1-6. The entire Adventist message rests heavily upon the prophetic and apocalyptic texts of Daniel and Revelation (*A Handbook of Protestant Denominations*, 1980).

As far as Surinam is concerned, the Adventist Church there was established around the 1920s. It was the North American Black Seventh Day Adventists who began the Adventist work in Surinam. Many people still have the old English hymnals that the North Americans used in the early Adventist church in Surinam. The English-speaking pastor was assisted by an interpreter. The foundation of the work was laid very solidly by the North American Black Seventh Day Adventists who were well received by the African people in Surinam.

It was in the 1940s that the General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists asked Holland to send a minister to pastor the Dutch-speaking Africans in Surinam. It was thus in those years that African Adventists in Surinam began to use the Dutch Bible and the Dutch Adventist Hymnals. Presently the Adventists have fifteen congregations nation-wide in Surinam. They also have three denominational schools in that country. The churches

are pastored by Black men who are largely being trained at the Caribbean Union College of Seventh Day Adventists in Trinidad and Tobago.

Through the humanitarian work of "Ingathering of Funds" from the church and the world, Seventh Day Adventists help take care of the poor and the needy in our country.

8. The Moravian Brethren or Herrnhutters

The Moravian brethren are the spiritual heirs of Johannes Hus, who was a professor in Prague. During his whole life, he struggled for the cleansing of the church from seeking too much power and riches. Under the leadership of Gregor, a Moravian church was founded in Moravia, forty years after Hus was burned at the stake as a heretic in 1415. In 1722 a few families of this Moravian congregation asked permission to settle on the estate of Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf and Pottendorf in East Germany, a little town near Dresden. In Czechoslovakia they were persecuted because of their faith. The group kept growing and Von Zinzendorf himself joined the group and became their spiritual leader and Bishop. Their village is named "Herrnhut" (meaning under the Lord's protection). In life and teaching the brethren (general term for brothers and sisters) accentuate sanctification and the living of life in thanksgiving to God — a salvation through which Jesus Christ takes a very central place in their theology and preaching. The well-known painting of Jesus with the crown of thorns, which had the inscription: "This I have done for you, What did you do for me?" typifies the spirit of the Herrnhutters.

Through her attitude the Moravian Church gets into conflicts with the official churches, with whom they differ regarding teaching. One of the trademarks of the Herrnhutters is their great involvement in missions and evangelization. At the time of Zinzendorf's death in 1760, already more than 200 Herrnhutters had gone into the world (since 1732, when their first missionaries had gone to St. Thomas). Zinzendorf said: "Die Welt

ist Gottes Parochie" (The world is God's parish). In 1732 Moravian brethren went to St. Thomas; 1733 to Greenland; 1734 to Lapland; 1735 to Surinam; 1736 to South Africa and also to North America and Asia. On the 10th of December, 1735, the first Moravian missionaries came to Surinam, Von Larisch and Piesch en Berwig. They went to live on the plantation Berg en Dal. It was a very "illling climate" for the brothers and the opposition from the official Reformed and Lutheran Churches and the planters who wanted to keep the slaves uneducated and uninformed which made life even worse for them. The brethren were not immediately impressed and set up their first "vita communis" (communal life) in Paramaribo.

Their services at home were a great encouragement to the Black people. Often this was the reason that the opposition people were very angry. Their opponents tried to move the officials to forbid the services of the Brethren. But the Brethren answered: "Wir wohnen ja beismmen in einem Hause. Wir arbeiten zusammen, wir essen und trinken mit einander an einem Tisch und deshalb mussten wir auch mit einander singen und beten" (We live together in one house. We work together, we eat and drink together at one table and so we also have to sing and pray together.) Yet, they were not allowed to remain, and they decided to move into the country and go to the Indians. This new settlement, "Pilgerhut", had after 17 years a congregation of no less than 300 members. The missionaries learned the language of the Indians and the Negroes and translated the Bible and the textbooks in both languages. Their self-sacrifice and the result of their work changed the mind of the government.

In the future the Brethren could count on the sympathy and the support of the government. They had such a good reputation in the interior of Surinam that the Sacramaccans themselves asked, through the mouth of the prophet Johannes King, for them. King had met the Lord Jesus in a vision and had gone to the Brethren in Paramaribo. From them he received some education, after which he returned to his tribe, the Matowaiers.

He told his tribe members what he had seen and heard; he then founded a church in the jungle.

In Paramaribo a few of the Brethren started to work for the daily bread, and to raise the money needed for the costs of the missionaries in the jungle. Starting very small as a tailoring firm, the business developed to become the big concern, "C. Kersten & Co.," named after the leader of the City Mission in Paramaribo. In 1780 before the military coup, the firm still had quite a great business reputation. Plantation owners felt threatened by the mission. Only after they had received the assurance that the missionaries would not attempt to develop the slaves, but would help to teach the slaves to resign to their fate and to work as hard as possible, did they gradually allow the missionaries into the plantations. People began to understand that slaves were not just inventory. More and more the plantation managers allowed the Brethren to bring their message to the colored workers. It is due to the work of the Brethren that slavery was abolished on July 1, 1863. There were no riots. Also, the Negro people did not hate their former masters, because in the message of the gospel there is no place for hatred.

The Consequences

The Brethren took an all-around approach to preaching the gospel. The kerygmatic, diaconic and socio-economic character that emanates from Christ's gospel. How did it work?

Community: The first thing that they did was to start a Koinonia. In this we should not forget to take into consideration the words of Von Zinzendorf: "Ich stuiere kein Christentum ohne Gemeinschaft" (I accept no Christianity without Fellowship). This community of the Brethren was a crucial instrument in preaching the gospel to the African. They preached, used writing, and what is an important part in the liturgy of the Moravian Church, they sang. The Brethren were of the opinion that liturgy

is stipulated by Christ in service to the neighbor.

We must not overlook the socio-economic side of the work. From the beginning the medical work was an integral part of the work. The educational work in schools and boarding schools shows us that this work had to be done because of Christ; this is the essence of the Moravian educational work. In this manner also the West African was brought into contact with the liberating gospel of Christ. Outside of the church the Brethren met the Negro with the gospel.

In the past the Surinamese government had a very high view of Passion Week. On Good Friday the offices, the factories and the schools would be shut. Negative responses to the preaching of the gospel were also to be found outside the church. And still you will find a dualistic attitude among the Christianized Negroes. Probably at the beginning some biblical notions were unconsciously left out. Christ and his salvation are not seen in their proper proportions. It was very hard for the Brethren in their time to adopt a contextual approach to mission. To be able to understand the Negro's dualistic attitude, you need to study his view of life thoroughly, remembering that the Negro hears the gospel differently from the one who brought it. The Negro world is still not the world of our Lord Jesus Christ. That world is full of roaming spirits who are not under Christ, and the changing of the times is viewed as something outside of Christ.

Examples: At the changing of the season man must do certain things which are necessary ('vanodoe'). He should take a cleansing bath. The change from old year to new year is a dangerous moment for the Negro; the ritual is to eliminate the impending danger. If he does not do this, then he can expect problems in the New Year. When the Negro is sick then he can look for the cause — next to the medical expert — in the neglect of something. Church hymns are sung at political gatherings. In the Roman Catholic church you can use a burning candle in the church to pray, not for the welfare of the other, but just to let him get a very bad life.

What Should The Church Do?

The church will have to gain more knowledge, more knowledge of Christ's salvation; knowledge of religion and how it is experienced in a non-Christian world. The church will also have to translate salvation into that special world so that a Surinamese theology will arise, in which Christ reveals himself as the Only Lord and Saviour, who, in the last days, will be all in all, which is the context of the biblical message. The church should not be a strange expression because Christ himself has promised: "...for lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Every day is another day. All people shall hear the gospel of Jesus. This is a certain truth! But it is also very true that all the people will hate the gospel. And still, in every nation there will be a core which loves Jesus and from these cores Christ will build himself a world church.

In the history of missions there has been a period of pioneers, and we often think back in gratitude to these pioneers. But the pioneering days are over. In the history of missions came a second day which has been of great significance — the day in which the independent churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America were rising. But this day also is over. In which day are we living?

Today is the day in which the young churches of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean are in the midst of a rapid change in the history of humankind. In this day, these churches have the task to be the Church of Jesus Christ under all circumstances. In this day they have the calling to raise up signs of the coming Kingdom of Christ amongst the surrounding peoples. Jesus says that there will be another day following this day; that He will be with us in the following days of the history of missions to the nations of the world, until the end of the world, until there will be the final revelation of his kingdom.

Ladies and gentlemen, Pentecost lies behind us, the Holy Spirit, the

Paraclete has been sent to us as a Comforter. What else then must we do in looking for possibilities to penetrate the spirituality of the peoples, but to pray: *Veni Creator Spiritus*? And what else but to radically obey the mission command of our Lord Jesus Christ?

May the God of hope strengthen in us the hope which is fixed on Christ. May God bless you.