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**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:
RELIGION IN GUYANA**

By Clifton L. Holland, Director of PROLADES

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PROLADES

Apartado 1524-2050, San Pedro, Costa Rica
Telephone (506) 2283-8300; FAX (506) 2234-7682
Internet: <http://www.prolades.com/>
E-Mail: prolades@racsa.co.cr

Religion in Guyana

Country Summary

The Cooperative Republic of Guyana (formerly British Guiana) is located on South America's northeastern coast, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, between Venezuela in the northwest and Surinam (formerly Dutch Guiana) in the east. The country's southern and southwestern border is shared with Brazil. Much of the territory is hot and humid and lies along its main rivers—the Mazaruni, the Essequibo, the Demerara and the Berbice. The Courantyne River forms the nation's eastern boundary with Surinam. Most of the inhabitants reside on the northern coastal plain. The country today has an area of 83,000 square miles and a population of about 760,000 (2008).



Discovered by Europeans in 1498, Guyana was fought over for 500 years by the Spanish, French, Dutch and British. Today Guyana is the third-smallest independent state on the mainland of South America, after Uruguay and Suriname.

The capital and major city is Georgetown, nicknamed “Garden City of the Caribbean,” founded in 1781. It is the nation's major retail, administrative and financial services center.

Other important cities are Linden (60,000) and New Amsterdam (33,000). The latter was founded in 1740, first named *Fort Sint Andries*, and was made seat of the

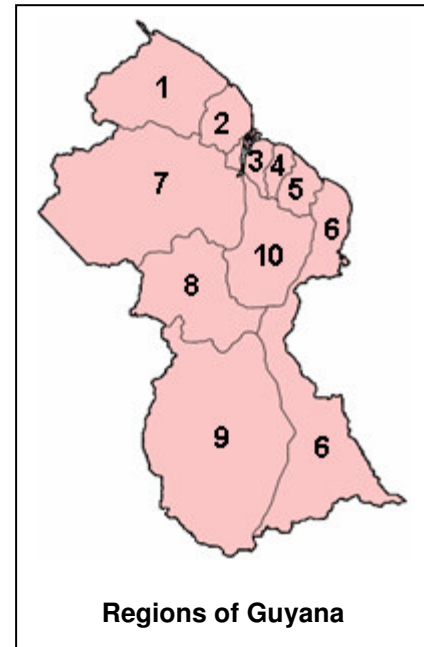
Dutch colonial government in 1790. Linden was only declared a town-ship in 1970 and includes the communities of MacKenzie and Wismar. It lies on the Demerara River, about 107 km south of Georgetown, and is primarily a bauxite mining town.

Guyana achieved independence from the United Kingdom of Great Britain on 26 May 1966 and became a republic on 23 February 1970, and a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It is the only state of the Commonwealth on the mainland of South America. Guyana is also a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which has its secretariat headquarters in Guyana's capital.

Administratively, Guyana is divided into 10 regions, and the regions are divided into 27 neighborhood councils:

No	Region	Area km ²	Population	Population per km ²
1	Barima-Waini	20,339	24,275	1.2
2	Pomeroon-Supenaam	6,195	49,253	8.0
3	Essequibo Islands-West Demerara	2,232	103,061	46.2
4	Demerara-Mahaica	1,843	310,320	168.4
5	Mahaica-Berbice	3,755	52,428	14.0
6	East Berbice-Corentyne	36,234	123,695	3.4
7	Cuyuni-Mazaruni	47,213	17,597	0.3
8	Potaro-Siparuni	20,051	10,095	0.5
9	Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo	57,750	19,387	1.3
10	Upper Demerara-Berbice	19,387	41,112	2.1
	Guyana	214,999	751,223	3.49

Lying near the equator, Guyana has a tropical climate and temperatures do not vary much throughout the year. There are two wet seasons, from December to early February and from late April to mid-August. Average rainfall is heaviest in the northwest and lightest in the southeast and interior. Although the temperature never gets dangerously high, the combination of heat and humidity can at times seem oppressive. The country's northern region is under the influence of the northeast trade winds; during the midday and afternoon, sea breezes bring relief to the coastal areas. Guyana lies south of the Atlantic Hurricane Belt, so it is not greatly affected by hurricanes. However, flash floods are a constant threat during rainy seasons.



Guyana's terrain is mainly rolling highlands. The country can be divided into three regions: a narrow plain along the Atlantic Ocean where most of the population lives; a white sand belt consisting of dense rainforests; and finally the larger interior highlands consisting mostly of mountains that gradually rise to the Brazilian border. Guyana's highest mountains are located in the interior highlands, including Mount Roraima at 2,835 meters (the highest mountain in Guyana), which is part of the Pakaraima range, on the western border with Venezuela. Between the Rupununi River (a branch of the Essequibo River) on the west and the Courantyne River on the east, lies the vast Rupununi savannah, south of which lie the Kamao Mountains on the border with Brazil.

The coastal plain, which occupies about five percent of the country's area, ranges from five to six kilometers wide and extends 430 km from the Courantyne River in the east to the Venezuelan border in the northwest. This is where more than 90 percent of its inhabitants reside, squeezed between encroaching tropical rainforest on one side and a vast and wild ocean on the other.

Farmland – rice and sugar, mainly – hinders the jungle’s natural desire to reclaim its lost territory and a crumbling seawall protects the land from ocean waves.

Seawall is the name given to the wall of concrete built along the seashore in Guyana, mostly in Demerara County. It is part of the battle against the Atlantic Ocean waves. The most famous stretch of seawall is the Georgetown Seawall. Seawalls were found necessary because of the constant erosion of land by the sea. Historians note that two estates, “Kierfield” and “Sandy Point” known to exist in 1792 north of the present Georgetown Sea Wall, were completely washed away by 1804.

The seashore line is subject to cycles of erosion and accretion. It appears that accretion in the early 1840s was followed by erosion in the late 1840s. By 1855, the great Kingston Flood took place when the earthen sea-dam was breached. It was after this catastrophe that the seawall between Fort William Frederick and the Round House was started in 1858. Built principally by convict labor with granite rocks from the Penal Settlement at Mazaruni (now Mazaruni Prison), it was completed in 1892. Serious flooding resulting from breaches in the seawall took place at Enmore in 1955, at Buxton in 1959, and at Bladen Hall in 1961.

The interior rainforests and highlands of Guyana are a vast, largely uncharted wilderness, about the size of Great Britain but is one of the most sparsely populated areas in the world. It is a land of mighty rivers, stunning waterfalls and huge savannahs. It is inhabited by small numbers of Amerindians, whose way of life has not changed much since their ancestors fled farther south to escape captivity by successive waves of foreign immigration and colonialism. Although bothered by the occasional presence of gold and diamond prospectors, the remote existence of the Amerindians is accompanied by a large variety of flora and fauna, including the jaguar and the Harpy Eagle, which are rare and endangered. The Harpy Eagle, reputedly the strongest eagle in the world, lives in the tall trees of thick rainforests in Guyana's southern region. It can grow to be as large as 36 to 40 inches in length and up to 20 pounds in weight, and it can reach speeds above 50 mph in flight. Harpy eagles are not numerous and are difficult to see; however, several Amerindian communities are now noting and protecting nesting sites so that serious bird watchers could observe them.

Travel to the interior is along its main rivers because of the absence of roads beyond the coastal plain. Numerous rivers flow into the Atlantic Ocean, generally in a northward direction. A number of rivers in the western part of the country, however, flow eastward into the Essequibo River, draining the Kaieteur Plateau.

The nation’s four longest rivers are the Essequibo at 1,010 km (628 mi), the Courantyne River at 724 km (450 mi), the Berbice at 595 km (370 mi), and the Demerara at 346 km (215 mi). The Essequibo River and its tributaries form the country's major drainage basin, which extends from the Brazilian border in the south to a wide delta west of Georgetown. The rivers of eastern Guyana cut across the coastal zone, making east-west travel difficult, but they also provide limited water access to the interior. Waterfalls generally limit water transport to the lower portions of each river. Some of the waterfalls are spectacular; for example, Kaieteur Falls on the Potaro River drops 227 meters, more than four times the height of Niagara Falls on the U.S.-Canadian border. The Courantyne River, the second longest in the nation, originates in the Acarai

Mountains and flows northward between Guyana and Suriname, emptying into the Atlantic Ocean near Corriverton, Guyana, and Nieuw Nickerie, Suriname.

The nation has very little farmland or permanent pastures, whereas the forests and woodlands occupy about 84 percent of the territory. Its natural resources are bauxite, gold, diamonds, hardwood timber, shrimp and fish. Crops grown for domestic consumption include sugar, rice, coffee, bananas, citrus, cassava, yams, and a variety of legumes and vegetables. Livestock production is not a major activity in Guyana because of a shortage of adequate pasture land and the lack of adequate transportation. In 1987, there were an estimated 210,000 cattle, 185,000 pigs, 120,000 sheep, and 15 million chickens in the country. Guyana imported Cuban Holstein-Zebu cattle in the mid-1980s in an effort to make the country self-sufficient in milk production; however, by 1987, annual milk production had reached 32 million liters or only half the target quantity.

Agriculture is Guyana's main economic activity, which provides nearly half the total value of exports and a large part of domestic food needs. Because the narrow strip of rich, alluvial soil along the coast lies in part below the high-tide mark of the sea and rivers, and because of heavy seasonal rainfall, agricultural expansion requires heavy expenditures for flood control, drainage, and irrigation. Only about 2.5 percent of the land is used for temporary and permanent crop production.

North West District, an 8,000 square mile (21,000 sq km) area bordering on Venezuela that was organized in 1889, is approximately one-tenth the area of the country. Its western border is scarcely 100 miles from the eastern edge of the great Venezuela cattle savannahs, while its southern boundary runs along the division line of the Cuyuni and Barama River basins. The northern and northeastern sections include thousands of acres of rich alluvial soil, of which its main crops include coffee, a variety of vegetables, citrus and other fruits. Gold and diamond mining is also carried out there. Gold was discovered there in 1879, and a mining boom in the 1890s helped the economic development of the colony.

Guyana has two sugarcane harvests per year, and there are currently eight sugar mills in operation. About 90 percent of all sugarcane is grown on land owned or leased by Guysuco, the government-owned sugar monopoly. Guysuco is managed under contract by the British firm Booker Tate. Independent farmers contribute only about eight percent to total sugarcane production.

Guyana is not an efficient producer of sugar and cannot compete on the world market; it depends on preferential export markets for its sugar trade. Sugar production in 1999 was 3,000,000 tons, up from the 395,000 tons produced in 1971; sugar accounted for 29% of exports in 1980 and about 22% in 2001. Rice production in 1999 (600,000 tons) has more than doubled since 1991. Agricultural exports in 2001 totaled US \$171.7 million.

Ethnic groups. Guyana's ethnic mix is the direct product of the colonial economy. Except for the Amerindians and a few Europeans, the country's ethnic groups are the descendants of groups brought in to work on the early plantations. An economy based on sugar production required a large labor force. Attempts to enslave the Amerindian population failed, and the planters soon turned to African slaves as a labor source. By 1830 there were 100,000 African slaves in British Guiana.

After the Abolition of Slavery became totally effective in 1838, the planters found a new source of cheap labor in the form of indentured workers: foreigners were recruited to work for a specific number of years, usually five, with the possibility of reenlisting for an additional period and eventually being repatriated. Even before slavery was abolished, the importation of indentured workers had begun. They were recruited from Portugal, India, China, and the West Indies. Although the terms of indentureship were nearly as harsh as slavery, the planters succeeded in bringing about 286,000 persons into the country by the early 20th century. More than 80 percent of these indentured workers were East Indians, and their arrival profoundly affected Guyana's ethnic composition and the nature of Guyanese society in general.

Today, the Guyanese population is composed of East Indian (43.5 percent), African (30.2 percent), mixed race (16.7 percent), Amerindian (9.1 percent), other (0.5 percent) ethnic groups. The latter category includes those of European, Chinese and Middle Eastern ancestry (2002 census). The mixed race category includes Afro-European (“colored”), Afro-East Indian, Afro-Chinese, and Afro-Amerindian.

Languages. **English** is the official language of Guyana and used, for example, in its public schools. However, there are an estimated 538,500 speakers of **Hindustani** (often called “Hindi”). **Immigrant languages** include Portuguese, Saint Lucian Creole French, Urdu (a variety of the Hindustani language identified with Muslims) and various Chinese dialects.

In addition, **Guyanese Creole** (an English-based creole with African syntax whose grammar is not standardized) is widely spoken by an estimated 650,000 people (250,000 Blacks and 400,000 Hindustanis) along the northern coast (Regions I-V) and along the Rupununi River (Region IX), which runs from near the Brazilian border into the Essequibo River.

Cariban languages (*Akawaio, Arawak, Carib, Macushi, Patamona, WaiWai, Warao* and *Wapishana*, among others) are spoken by an estimated nine percent of the population. **Akawaio** (also known as **Ingarikó**) is most common in the region of the Upper Mazaruni River (Region VII), among an estimated 4,500 indigenous people. **The Arawak** represent 33 percent of the Amerindians in Guyana, with an estimated population of 15,500; they mainly reside in the north-east (Region XI) along the Courantyne River. **The Carib** ethnic group (about 6,000) represents six percent of the Amerindians in Guyana; they dwell in northwest and along the north coast (Region I). **The Macushi** (Makushi) are an ethnic group in the southwestern border area (Region IX) and northern Brazil, with approximately 9,500 Macushi-speakers in Guyana and 15,000 in Brazil. **The Patamona** reside in the west-central area of the country in 13 villages with a population of about 4,700. **The Waiwai** dwell in the far south of the country, near the headwaters of the Essequibo River (Region IX). There are approximately 200 Waiwai-speakers in Guyana and 2,000 in Brazil. **The Warao** are an ethnic group (about 5,000) residing in the northwest (Region I), at Oreala near the coast, among a population mixed with Arawak and Carib speakers. **The Wapishana** are an ethnic group of southern Guyana (Region IX), located northwest of the Wai-wai, with approximately 6,000 Wapishana-speakers.

The three administrative districts in which the majority of Amerindians live (the Mazaruni Potaro, North West and Rupununi) include 90 major Amerindian villages. Each political unit of the Amerindian society, the village, is headed by a Captain or *Touchau* elected by the people to maintain law and order in the village. In turn, the Captain, who is paid a monthly stipend by the Government, is responsible to the appropriate Government Officer.

Amerindians live mostly in the **Amerindian Reservations** (occupying a total of about 6,000 square miles). The reservation system was introduced in 1902. In 1910, the **Aboriginal Indians Protection Ordinance** made the Commissioner of Lands and Mines the **Amerindian Protector**, proscribed visits to the reservation without authorization, and generally regulated Amerindian affairs. In 1951, a new Amerindian Ordinance was introduced, which represented a policy of acculturation and brought Amerindian villages under the Local Government System.

Current Religious Situation

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contribute to the generally free practice of religion. The law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Although the Guyanese constitution guarantees religious freedom, during the early decades of Independence the Marxist-oriented governments promoted atheism, one symbol of which was the nationalization of all the schools operated by various religious groups. Religious groups and buildings are registered through the government's Ministry of Home Affairs. The presence of foreign religious personnel is strictly regulated.

According to the 2002 Census, approximately 57 percent of the population is Christian, distributed as follows: 17 percent Pentecostal, eight percent Roman Catholic, seven percent Anglican, five percent Seventh-day Adventist, and 20 percent other Christian groups. Approximately 28 percent of the population is Hindu, seven percent is Muslim (mostly Sunni), and two percent practice other religious beliefs. An estimated four percent of the population does not profess any religion. Some religious groups claim higher affiliation than reported by the 2002 Census.

The country is ethnically diverse due to its East Indian, African, Chinese and European ancestry, as well as a significant Amerindian population. Members of all ethnic groups are well represented in all religious groups, with two exceptions: most Hindus are Indo-Guyanese, and nearly all Rastafarians are Afro-Guyanese. By the end of the 19th century, most of the Afro-Guyanese and Chinese-Guyanese had become Christians, either Roman Catholic or Protestant. Native American indigenous religions have survived in the interior of Guyana among the tribal peoples, as noted in the **Languages** section (above).

Several national autonomous religious groups began to form in British Guiana, beginning in the 18th century. **The Hallelujah Church**, an Amerindian prophetic movement that sought to blend indigenous (animistic) spirituality with Christianity, had emerged by 1850 among tribal peoples in the headwaters of the Essequibo River. And, at the end of the 19th century, the **Jordonites** developed a new religious system that combined Hindu (reincarnation), Jewish, Christian, African and occult elements.

Historical Overview of Social, Political and Religious Development

The earliest humans may have reached what is today the country of Guyana as early as thirty-five thousand years ago. In modern times the territory became home to two Amerindian groups, the Arawaks who inhabited the coast and the Caribs in the interior. Eventually, the more warlike

Caribs displaced the Arawaks, a process repeated several times as both groups moved into the islands of the Caribbean. They bequeathed to the territory the name Guiana, or “land of waters.” Christopher Columbus sailed along the coast of Guiana in 1498, but the first European settlers were from Holland. The Dutch constructed a fort on the coast in 1616, the first of several settlements to facilitate trade. The Dutch West India Company administered the colony into the 18th century. As agriculture increased in the mid-1600s, the Dutch West India Company began to import African slaves, and the shrinking Amerindian population moved inland.

The Colonies of Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice

The modern nation of Guyana was previously controlled by several European powers: the Dutch, French and British who established themselves in parts of the territory at various times.

Demerara. This region, located on the lower courses of the Demerara River, became a Dutch colony in 1611. Demerara sugar is so named because originally it came from sugarcane fields in this colony. When the colony was captured by the British in 1781, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Kingston chose the mouth of the Demerara River for the establishment of a town that was situated between Plantations Werk-en-rust and Vlissengen.

It was the French who developed this town and made it their capital city when they captured the colony in 1782. The French called the capital Longchamps. They established stringent regulations for private building in an attempt to guard against the dangers of flood and fire. Buildings were to have brick foundations, kitchens were to be tiled and set apart, and no thatch was to be used. Brickdam, the first paved road, was built by the French, and was known then as Middle Dam.

When the town was restored to the Dutch in 1784, it was renamed *Stabroek* after Nicolaas Geelvinck (b.1732-d.1787), the Lord of Stabroek and President of the Dutch West India Company. Eventually the town expanded and covered the estates of Vlissengen, La Bourgade and Eve Leary to the north, and Werk-en-rust and La Repentir to the south. Finally, in September 1803, the British occupied the colony again. The capital was renamed **Georgetown** on 29 April 1812 in honor of King George III.

The Demerara Lighthouse (103 feet in height) stands in its red and white stripes on Water Street, Georgetown, at the mouth of the Demerara River. The foundation stone of the lighthouse was laid in 1830. It replaced a wooden lighthouse constructed by the Dutch in 1817. Sea-going ships obtained clearance from the lighthouse service to enter the Port of Georgetown. Arrangements were then made for customs, quarantine and immigration officers to visit the ship.

Essequibo. Between 1616 and 1781, the Dutch controlled a vast area along the Essequibo River. Using Kykoveral and later Fort Island as their bases of operation, Dutch traders and agents, appointed by the Director General, traveled to various locations by foot and canoe. They established contacts with many Amerindian villages with which they traded European goods for annatto dye, letter-wood, and crab oil.

The Essequibo River was the main communication route. By the 1730s, a trading post was set up at the junction of the Siparuni and Essequibo Rivers. In 1756, this post, known as Arinda, was

relocated at the junction of the Rupununi and Essequibo Rivers. Beginning from the early 1740s, the Director General took steps to establish total control of the Essequibo River basin. He sent Nicolas Hortsman, a surveyor, to locate the source of the river and plant the Dutch flag there.

In the area of the Mazaruni River, the Dutch established both company and private plantations. Trading was also conducted with the Amerindians who lived there. The entire Mazaruni River basin was considered Dutch territory, and on one occasion when it was learned that Amerindians loyal to the Spanish had moved into the area the Director General sent a force of loyal Caribs to eject them.

The Dutch established a trading post on the upper Cuyuni River as early as 1680 in the Pariacot savannah to trade with the Amerindians. An intermittent trade in horses with the Spanish settlers further west in the Orinoco River basin developed during this period. The horses were herded along a trail on the bank of the Cuyuni River to Kykoveral from where they were sent to the sugar mills on the Essequibo plantations.

Berbice. The territory along the Berbice River was settled in 1627 by the Dutchman Abraham van Peere and became a Dutch colony with its capital in Fort Nassau, where the Governor resided. In November 1712, Berbice was briefly occupied by the French under Baron de Mouans. The city of New Amsterdam has its origins in a village that grew up alongside Fort Nassau in the 1730s and 1740s. The first *Nieuw Amsterdam*, as it was called then, was situated about 56 miles up the Berbice River on the right bank. Built in 1740 by the Dutch, New Amsterdam was first named *Fort Sint Andries*, located four miles upriver from the mouth of the Berbice River, on its eastern bank, immediately south of the Canje River.

In 1762, the entire colony of Berbice only had 346 whites (including women and children) and 3,833 African slaves. Prior to the Berbice Slave Rebellion in 1763-1764 (led by a slave named Coffy), New Amsterdam contained a Court of Policy building, a warehouse, an inn, two smithies, a bakery, a Lutheran church and a number of houses, among other buildings. A rebuilt New Amsterdam became the seat of the Dutch colonial government in 1790.

The Berbice Slave Rebellion, which lasted for 10 months, marked the first serious attempt by a large group of enslaved people to win their freedom in British Guiana. Significantly, it was also the first organized attempt by slaves to win their freedom in the entire American continent. Despite the division in the ranks and the eventual failure of the rebellion, from it emerged the first group of Guyanese revolutionary heroes who initiated the struggle against colonial oppression.

The African slave population grew as plantations expanded. The main concern of the white plantation owners was to extract the greatest amount of labor from the slaves as possible. Little effort was ever made to improve the wretched and degrading living conditions under which they were forced to live. With the harsh treatment and brutal punishments inflicted on them by their owners, some of them rebelled while others, from time to time, escaped into the forests. Those who were recaptured suffered horrible deaths as punishment, meant also as a deterrent to other slaves who might have also planned to escape. Some of those in Berbice who escaped managed to reach Suriname where they joined up with independent Bush Negro colonies in the interior.

In February 1781, during the American War of Independence, the British captured Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice from the Dutch. During the period of their occupation, the British surveyed Essequibo along the coast to a point beyond the Barima River and inside the Great Mouth of the Orinoco. A map was drafted by the officer in charge of this expedition and was later published in London in 1783. A note on this map showed the western boundary of the colony as the Barima River but which was shown in the position actually occupied by the Amakura River.

In February 1782, the French seized the colonies from the English, and in the following year when peace was established, they were handed back to the Netherlands. At that period, the French were allies of the North Americans who were fighting their war of independence against the British. The Dutch remained neutral during the American War of Independence, but they supplied the Americans with goods and, as such, were regarded as friends of the French. On 22 April 1796, the British again occupied the territory. On 27 March 1802, Berbice was restored to the Batavian Republic (the name of the Netherlands at that time).

In Europe, war broke out between Britain and France in 1803. The war prevented merchant ships from Holland and Britain to sail to Guyana and the planters found problems in obtaining supplies. The planters in turn were unable to export their products and to pay their installments on mortgages held in British and Dutch banks. By this time investment by British banks in the Guyanese sugar plantations was very high but they faced a serious problem of the devaluation of their stocks if shipping was not resumed. The British bankers felt that only the resumption of British control of Guyana could save their investment and this view was supported by the planters in Guyana.

The British occupied the territory again in September 1803. Berbice became a British colony on 13 August 1814, and was formally ceded to Britain by the Netherlands on 20 November 1815. English King William IV, on 4 March 1831, issued a Commission that united Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice as the Colony of British Guiana. Sir Benjamin D'Urban, who was serving as Governor of Essequibo-Demerara was appointed the first Governor of the united colony. In 1838, for administrative purposes, the united colony was divided into the three counties of Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice.

Labor Difficulties in the Post-Emancipation Period

The British Government abolished the Slave Trade in its West Indian colonies in 1823, followed by partial Emancipation in 1834 and full Emancipation in 1838. Despite the fact that the new Apprenticeship system forced the ex-slaves to continue to provide a great proportion of free labor on the plantations between 1834 and 1838, the amount of available labor (free or paid) was not sufficient to maintain a steady level of production. The situation became even more acute after 1838 when apprenticeship ended. Immediately after Emancipation, the European planters and the colonial government decided not to sell land to the freed slaves. The general aim was to ensure that the Africans continued to be a source of labor on the plantations.

In 1829, there were about 230 sugar and 174 coffee and cotton plantations, almost all of which were fully cultivated. But by 1849 these were reduced to 180 sugar and 16 small coffee plantations. Cotton cultivation on a commercial scale no longer was feasible because of competition

from slave-produced cotton in the United States. The cotton mills in England preferred to purchase cotton from the USA because the prices were lower.

Whole districts were being abandoned and taken over by fast-growing bush. Where flourishing estates existed, there were now only small, scattered plots of land cultivated by the ex-slaves who lived in small villages.

In the area between the Abary and Mahaicony Rivers, the large cotton plantations that had existed were abandoned and overrun with bush. This situation also existed in the district between the Mahaicony and Mahaica Rivers and even on the previously more flourishing area on the west bank of the Mahaica. There was an almost total neglect of roads, bridges and canals. The freed Africans who lived in those districts established small squatting villages on some of these abandoned plantations, or through their own savings managed to collectively purchase some of these lands from the European owners especially after 1838. In the backlands, they cultivated small farms to produce fruits, vegetables and other food products. They also kept a few cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry.

In East Coast Demerara, the labour shortage was more strongly felt after 1838, when the Africans withdrew their labor and opted to move to villages they established outside the limits of the existing plantations. The three best estates in the entire country – La Penitance, Ruimveldt and Houston – suffered badly from decreased production through intermittent labor shortage. The West Demerara area did not fare better. The abandoned coffee lands were occupied by African squatter settlements.

The situation was even worse in Essequibo. Leguan, which had 23 sugar and three coffee plantations before 1834, had only eight producing plantations in the 1840s. There was a significant reduction of sugar, coffee and cotton cultivation on Wakenaam, Hogg Island, Tiger Island and the Essequibo Coast also.

The situation in Berbice was no different. After 1838, more than 12,000 of the rural population of 18,000 were living on small freeholds and bush and squatter settlements. By the 1840s, almost all the cotton plantations were abandoned. The West Coast Berbice district, which was one of the most productive cotton growing areas in the entire country, became a desolate area with the complete abandonment of the plantations. In the eastern part of Berbice, only a few sugar estates continued to show some progress.

Meanwhile, the planters were losing money because of the wages they now had to pay to the laborers on their estates. In 1842, they announced a reduction in wages, and the African laborers immediately retaliated with a strike that lasted for six weeks. The planters were forced to reinstate the wage structure before the strike was called off.

However, most of the Africans were not too interested in working on the estates. They continued to occupy the houses they lived in during slavery, cultivated their small farm plots and caught fish in the canals. They maintained themselves by this form of subsistence. Whenever they needed money, they grouped themselves under a headman and bargained with the planters for a quantity of work for the highest pay possible. After completing the task in three or four days, they would then disperse until another task was arranged for them.

Most of the freed slaves believed they had no economic future if they continued to reside on the plantations. After seeing other Africans buying up the abandoned cotton plantations, they felt that they too must acquire their own land. During the period of the 1842 strike, 65 of them pooled their savings and purchased the Plaisance estate for \$39,000. The estates of Peter's Hall, Farm and Garden of Eden on the East Bank Demerara, and Danielstown and Bush Lot on the Essequibo Coast, were also acquired during the 1840s by groups of Africans.

Another strike in December 1847 to protest another cut in wages forced more Africans to abandon the sugar estates. Some of them moved to the existing villages while others who had no savings squatted on Crown lands. The moving away of Africans from the estates placed added pressures on sugar production and the planters used devious means to force them to return to work there.

The African villages also faced administrative problems during the 1840s. The shareholders, or proprietors, possessed no experience in cooperative management. Most of them had used up their savings to purchase land, so they had nothing left for maintaining the roads, bridges, sluice gates, and drainage canals. As a result, the conditions of the villages and the communal plantations deteriorated.

In 1852, there were over 82,000 Africans of working age and roughly half of them lived in African villages and worked occasionally on the estates. By that time, Africans had established 25 villages on lands they purchased for over one million dollars. Africans also owned over 2,000 freehold properties. Freehold Private Lands are those lands that have been purchased from the State or from previous owner by private or corporate interests.

Immigration of Indentured Laborers

After the Abolition of Slavery by the British in 1834, there was a shortage of laborers on the plantations in British Guiana. Due to the close proximity of the **British West Indian colonies**, the planters of British Guiana felt it would be more economical to bring a paid labor force from those islands than elsewhere. Between 1835 and 1838, about 5,000 laborers were recruited from Barbados, St. Kitts, Antigua, Montserrat and Nevis. These islands either had no apprenticeship system or they had a fairly large free African population by 1834. The employment of West Indian full-time wage labor was carried out by the private sugar planters who competed sharply among them-selves for the available migrant workers. Many of the newly recruited migrants were openly induced by other planters who offered them higher wages to leave their employers.

The Guianese planters also looked to Africa to obtain additional laborers after 1834. In the period that followed, slaves from Africa continued to be transported to the USA, Cuba and Brazil. Some of the slave ships were boarded by British warships and the Africans were removed from them. Most were returned to Africa, but some of them were taken to British Guiana and the West Indies as indentured laborers.

Permission was also granted by the British Government for the recruitment of contract labor from **West Africa**. This recruitment and emigration from West Africa was closely controlled since there were fears that if too many persons were contracted it could stimulate an internal slave trade in that region. Beginning in 1841, agents began to recruit laborers from **Sierra Leone**, most of

whom had been liberated from the slave trading ships boarded by the British. Between 1838 and 1865, a total of 13,355 Africans came to British Guiana as contract laborers.

Portuguese-speaking Madeira Islanders began arriving as indentured laborers in 1835, as well as others from the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands, all of which were Portuguese possessions in the Atlantic Ocean near the west coast of North Africa. The immigrants from these islands peaked at 9,859 in 1861 and then declined to 6,879 in 1881, according to the population table presented below for the period 1851 to 1881.

Census of Population in British Guiana, 1851-1881

BIRTHPLACES OF THE PEOPLE.	1851.	1861.	1871.	1881.
British Guiana	86,451	93,861	113,570	149,639
West India Islands	9,278	8,309	13,385	18,318
Madeira, Azores, and Cape de Verde	7,928	9,859	7,925	6,879
Europe	} 2,088 {	1,482	1,444	1,617
North America		147	196	205
Places not mentioned before		293	322	897
Immigrants from Africa	14,251	9,299	7,541	5,077
Immigrants from Madras	3,665	3,664	2,535	} 65,161
Immigrants from Calcutta	4,017	18,416	40,146	
Immigrants from China	2,629	6,295	4,393
Born at sea	17	28	46	...
Not known	34	86	...
Grand totals	127,695	148,026	193,491	252,186

Between 1838, when the immigration of **indentured laborers from India** began, and 1917, when it ended, a total of 238,960 East Indians came to British Guiana. During this time 75,792 of them returned to their homeland, which means that an estimated 163,000 remained in British Guiana. According to the 1881 population census, there were about 65,000 East Indians in the colony. By 1917, East Indians comprised 44 percent of the colony's population.

Immigrants from the Chinese mainland came to British Guiana in two distinct periods. First, they came to work as indentured laborers on the sugar plantations (in 1853, 1859-1866, 1874 and 1879) because there was an acute labor shortage. Only 13,533 arrived in 39 ships during this period and many died or migrated to Suriname, Trinidad, St. Lucia and Jamaica. Second, they arrived as free, voluntary migrants in individual and small group movements from the 1890s to the present day.

By 1881, there were over 18,000 immigrants from the British West Indies in British Guiana, as well as about 5,000 African-born immigrants and 1,600 immigrants from Europe. The bulk of the population in 1881 (59 percent) were born in British Guiana and included the native Amerindians (no doubt underestimated by census officials) as well as the descendents of all previous immigrants from many nations and races.

The first railway system on the continent of South America was built in British Guiana between 1846 and 1900, using laborers of the various ethnic groups described above. It was first operated by the Demerara Railway Company but sold to the Colonial Transport Department of the government, which assumed control on 1 January 1922. The Demerara-Berbice railway ran along the coastline from Georgetown in Demerara to Rosignol in Berbice, a distance of 60.5 miles. It was connected by ferry steamer across the Berbice River with New Amsterdam. The Demerara-Essequibo railway stretched along the West Coast from Vreed-en-Hoop on the left bank of the Demerara to Parika on the Essequibo River. This public railway system was dismantled in stages in the early 1970s, at that time leaving only the industrial railway systems at bauxite mining sites and another linking Port Kaituma and Matthews Ridge in the Northwest District.

An Overview of British Guiana in 1920

The population of British Guiana in 1920 was estimated at about 300,000 and was composed mainly of four ethnic groups. The European inhabitants in 1904 were estimated at nearly 16,000, two-thirds of which were of Portuguese descent. There were about 30,000 of mixed race, mainly of White and Negro origin. About 120,000 were Negroes, descendants of the slaves imported in the 17th and 18th centuries. In addition, there had been a steady importation of East Indian laborers, the majority of whom had remained in the country after the expiration of their labor contracts; by 1904, they outnumbered the Blacks. Hindu temples and Muslim mosques were established by the Asian Indian immigrants. A small contingent of Chinese was also present among the “coolies” and petty traders.

In the interior, scattered among the forests and in the highlands, roamed groups of Amerindians of various tribes and languages. The majority of the surviving Native Americans, estimated at about 6,500, lived as hunters, gatherers and fishermen, retreating before the approach of the white man and retaining their ancient animistic beliefs and practices. Also present were clans of mixed Negroes and Amerindians, the offspring of runaway slaves of former times who escaped to the forests and mingled with the aborigines. There are also settlements in the forests of “Bush Negroes,” originally formed by fugitives from slavery who fled into the interior, built their own settlements, and retained their own languages and customs. They existed separately from the Amerindians.

Georgetown, the capital, situated at the mouth of the Demerara River, was a city of 50,000 people in 1920, which far exceeded in size and civic progress any other town in the British West Indies. **New Amsterdam**, on the banks of the Berbice River, with a population of 7,500, was the only other notable town of the colony. In addition to these two municipalities, there were about twenty “incorporated villages,” with their own civic councils, and ten other “country districts.”

The Modern Period, 1950 to the Present

During the 1950s, a study of three Creole-speaking Negro villages on the coast of British Guiana discovered that most of the inhabitants derived their livelihood partly from farming activities within their villages and partly from working as unskilled laborers on the sugar plantations or at the bauxite, gold and diamond mines. Also, some of the men worked as unskilled laborers with

the Public Works Department, and a small portion of the men had steady employment in government services or in the sugar factories (Smith 1971:243-266).

The United Kingdom of Great Britain retained control of the colony until Independence in 1966 when it was renamed Guyana. The U.S. State Department and its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), along with the British government, played a strong role in influencing political control in Guyana in the post-colonial period. The U.S. and British governments supported Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham (b.1923-d.1985) during the early years of Independence because **Cheddi Jagan** was a self-declared Marxist. The U.S. Government provided secret financial support and political campaign advice to **Burnham's People's National Congress (PNC)** to the detriment of the Jagan-led **People's Progressive Party (PPP)**, mostly supported by Guyanese of Asian Indian descent.

Burnham was one of the founding leaders of the PPP, which was launched on 1 January 1950; the Indo-Guyanese labor leader Cheddi Jagan became the PPP's Leader, while Burnham became its Chairman. In 1952, Burnham became the president of the party's affiliated trade union, the **British Guiana Labour Union**. In 1953, the PPP won 18 of 24 seats in the first election permitted by the British colonial government. In the short-lived PPP government that followed, Burnham served as Minister of Education. In 1955, there was a split in the PPP between Burnham and Jagan. As a result, Burnham went on to form the PNC in 1958 participated in its first election under that name in 1961.

In the 1964 elections, while Jagan's PPP won the highest percentage of the vote (46 percent to the PNC's 41 percent), it did not win a majority. Burnham was able to form a coalition with the **United Force (TUF)**, which won the remaining 12 percent of the votes, and he became premier of British Guiana on 14 December 1964. British Guiana became an independent country on 26 May 1966, and is now known as Guyana.

At first Burnham pursued moderate policies. However, one of his first acts after Independence was a sweeping "National Security Act" that gave the police the power to search, seize and arrest anyone virtually at will. He won full political power in the 1968 national elections. In 1970, he established strong relations with Cuba, the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries. On 23 February of that year, he declared Guyana a "Co-Operative Republic," and adopted a policy "of the people for the country, and the country for the people" (autarky = "self-sufficiency"). He banned some imported foods from entering the country under the motto, "Produce locally, buy locally, and trade with countries that have our best interest at heart." During the 1970s, key industries were nationalized with the help of advisors from Cuba, China and East Germany. Strong tensions emerged between Indo and Afro Guyanese, which aggravated political conflicts and instability.

As Guyana's Prime Minister Forbes Burnham and his People's National Congress (PNC) moved to implement their brand of "cooperative socialism", they introduced a new development plan in 1972 with the grand objective to "feed, clothe and house the nation by 1976." Burnham apparently believed that his nationalisation policy which was being implemented at that period would help accrue the revenues needed to finance this "FCH" plan. But he failed to understand that most of the agricultural producers — the Indians — were also PPP supporters whose democratic right to elect a government he had had taken away by rigging elections in 1968 and subsequently in 1973 as well. And with his studied policy of discrimin-

ating against these very people who were involved in production of agricultural commodities, the FCH plan was doomed to failure from the beginning.

Source: <http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/chapter5.html>

December 15, 1980 will remain as one of the blackest days experienced by the Guyanese people. It was on this day the regime of the People's National Congress (PNC), aided by the military forces, concluded its hat trick of crudely rigged elections, thus maintaining itself in power against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people of Guyana.

The fraudulent 1980 elections came after the PNC prepared and introduced constitutional machinery which rapidly eroded the democratic rights of the people.

Because of heavy mismanagement and corruption within the ranks of the PNC, the country was plunged into a serious political, economic and social crisis. Consequently, the PNC knew by 1978, five years after it had rigged itself a two-thirds majority in Parliament, that it had no hope of winning any fairly conducted election; especially more so with the growing support enjoyed by the People's Progressive Party (PPP), and to some extent, the Working People's Alliance (WPA) which was also undermining the PNC power base in the rural areas.

By this time, the PNC had become so power-drunk that it did not even entertain the proposals put forward by the PPP for the establishment of a national patriotic front government of all democratic and leftist forces in order to pull the nation out of the political and economic morass – the result of a pro-imperialist policy despite high sounding “socialist” slogans by the PNC – into which it has been rapidly sinking.

Source: <http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/chapter6.html>

The violence in Guyanese society today is said to be a direct hangover from the Burnham years, during which Guyana fell behind its Caribbean neighbors in social and economic development. Sugar and bauxite were among the industries that were nationalized, the civil service and judiciary were subordinated to party interests, and exchange controls put in place that a thriving black market in foreign currency developed. The education system collapsed, the middle classes fled, and the skilled workforce disappeared. In 2007, the World Bank reported that the Caribbean contained seven countries with the world's highest emigration rates for college students, of which Guyana, with an astonishing 89 percent, was the highest.

Forbes Burnham, President of Guyana and leader of the PNC, died in August 1985 and was succeeded to those positions by Desmond Hoyte. General elections were set for 9 December 1985 and on 4 November 1985 Hoyte agreed to some long fought for demands by the opposition parties to abolish the overseas vote and cut back on proxy voting – two of the instruments used to rig elections since 1968. In making his "concessions," he boasted that he was cutting the ground from under the PPP, which would no longer have any credible base to complain about "rigged" elections.

Strong opposition to the electoral arrangements came from the Bishops of the Catholic and Anglican churches, along with other representatives of trade unions, the Bar Association and the Guyana Human Rights Association. They expressed their disappointment over the way the elections were held and recorded that "the familiar and sordid catalogue of widespread disenfranchisement, multiple voting, ejection of polling agents, threats, intimidation, violence and collusion by police and army personnel characterised the poll. . . ."

Source: <http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/chapter13.html>

Desmond Hoyte succeeded Burnham as President and tried to steer a more neutral political course by avoiding anti-U.S. rhetoric and drawing closer to Western nations, and improving conditions in the private sector.

When President Desmond Hoyte took power in August 1985 after the death of Forbes Burnham, he declared his intention to speed up "the pursuit of socialist construction" in Guyana. He re-emphasised this assertion after he reinforced his power at grossly rigged elections four months later. However, within less than a year he began to find this pursuit untenable as Guyana continued to experience a serious economic crisis, a spill-over from the Burnham administration.

Faced with a steady decline in production levels and an acute shortfall in balance of payments, Hoyte ordered a cut in public spending and made attempts to encourage foreign investment. He also curtailed all policies geared towards "cooperative socialism" in the attempt to attract investment from North America and Western Europe and also to win financial support from the multilateral financial institutions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) since 1983 had curtailed all further lending to Guyana because payments on previous loans were long overdue and, in 1985, declared the country ineligible for further credit and loans.

No doubt, these IMF decisions caused Hoyte to declare during his address to the PNC's sixth biennial congress on 19 August 1985 that "we have concluded that the standard IMF prescription is not only palpably irrelevant and useless, but also positively dangerous and counter productive in our particular situation. We must resist with all our might the pressures that might be exerted to force us on to the IMF's procrustean bed."

Real GDP had declined by an average 10 percent in 1982-83 as a result of sharp contractions in the bauxite sector and decline and stagnation in most other productive sectors. Economic decline eased up in 1984, but the economy remained stagnant through 1987. With a per capita gross domestic product of only US\$500, Guyana was one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere.

Confronted with these stark economic realities, Hoyte was forced to depart from Burnham's economic policy because he realised that "cooperative socialism" had failed. At the same time, the country was burdened with a stifling foreign debt and a large payment of arrears which the PNC regime had accumulated. The arrears by 1988 were more than US\$885 million (about four times the Guyana's annual exports), and Hoyte feared that all credit to the country would be completely cut off by international donors. In this situation, he was propelled to carry out negotiations in 1988 with the IMF which quickly arranged with the World Bank an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) aimed at re-introducing a pro-capitalist market economy in place of the failed "cooperative socialist" programme of the past eighteen years.

Source: <http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/chapter18.html>

After the rigged elections in December 1985, five of the six opposition parties which contested the elections -- the **People's Progressive Party (PPP)**, the **Working People's Alliance (WPA)**, the **Democratic Labour Movement (DLM)**, **People's Democratic Movement (PDM)** and **National Democratic Front (NDF)** -- organised themselves into an alliance known as the **Patriotic Coalition for Democracy (PCD)**. The PCD at first limited its activities to the struggle for free and fair elections and human rights. Later, the parties decided to transform the alliance into an electoral front, with a consensus presidential

candidate, and a joint slate of candidates for the National Assembly. At the same time, the PPP proposed that the PCD should draft a political programme to present to the Guyanese people.

But it took almost two years before the parties could agree on the contents of the draft programme. The PPP, in a spirit of compromise, had agreed earlier to drop its insistence that the programme should have a socialist orientation. Unfortunately, by late 1989 agreement was not reached to publicise the programme, which the PPP preferred to be done before the general elections due in 1990, since it was necessary that all ethnic groups, classes and strata should see that their interests would be protected. However, the DLM did not agree since it felt that publication of the programme should be done only when there was an agreement on the consensus presidential candidate and the joint slate.

At the same time, there were differences on the choice of the consensus candidate -- the DLM wanted a person outside of the five parties; the WPA at first wanted the person chosen by the parties, but later changed its position. On the other hand, the PPP was always in favour of a party person. Further, there was disagreement also on allocation for the different parties on the joint slate, and a deadlock resulted.

Around the same time, a number of business persons, professionals and trade unionists formed the **Democratic Reform Movement** with the aim of supporting the struggle for democratic elections. With the PCD talks at a stalemate, the group, also referring to themselves as a group of "concerned citizens", met with the leadership of the PPP for discussions on the way forward. However, the group's proposals were virtually the same as those of the DLM and WPA.

On the question of the consensus presidential candidate, the group suggested the person should come from outside the parties. The PPP disagreed and re-stated its position that the consensus candidate must be a party person, and proposed its leader Cheddi Jagan for this position.

The group's response was that Jagan, being an Indo-Guyanese, was unacceptable since Afro-Guyanese who wanted change, including the police and army, would not accept him. They also claimed that Jagan was anti-business and an avowed communist and the Americans would find it difficult to support him. With these stated pre-qualifications, the group insisted that the presidential candidate must be an Afro-Guyanese.

The PPP disagreed with these views, but as its fall back position, it proposed Dr. Roger Luncheon, an Afro-Guyanese executive member of the PPP who was present at the meeting, as the consensus presidential candidate. But in an amazing and revolting response, the group rejected this proposal, declaring that Luncheon was unsuitable because he was "Black but Red", meaning that although he was an Afro-Guyanese, he was a communist.

In other words, the Democratic Reform Movement did not want the presidential candidate to come from the PPP because of race (Cheddi Jagan was not acceptable because he was Indo-Guyanese) and ideology (Roger Luncheon was not acceptable because he was "communist"). The group also suggested that the PPP should have a minority share in any future legislature and Cabinet.

Not surprisingly, the PPP rejected these conditions totally. The party felt that in principle, the Indo-Guyanese, the largest ethnic group in Guyana would not accept the view that an Indo-Guyanese regardless of ability, suitability and reliability, should be excluded simply because of ethnicity.

As far as the joint slate was concerned, in all the formulas advanced by the Democratic Reform Movement, the WPA and the DLM, the PPP was to be in the minority. The party also noted that placing it in a minority position in the Cabinet and legislature was unrealistic and unacceptable. Its position was that in

the interest of the nation and the people, it did not want to dominate or to be dominated in any future government.

Source: <http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/chapter21.html>

In the meantime, the Democratic Reform Movement, as it attracted more adherents from civic society, transformed itself to the **Guyanese Action for Reform and Democracy (GUARD)** in early 1990. Among its leading members were Samuel Hinds, an engineer from Linden, and Nanda Gopaul, a well-known trade unionist. Other members included Bishop Randolph George of the Anglican diocese, Andrew Morrison, a Jesuit priest and editor of the *Catholic Standard*, Mike McCormack, a human rights activist, Basil Butcher, a former test cricketer, Albert Rodrigues, a human rights activist, and Clairmont Lye, a businessman.

GUARD's aim was to encourage citizens to participate actively in the electoral process, independent of the political parties. It was purely a civic movement that stressed moral reform and it attracted many leading business persons, and religious leaders from the Christian, Hindu and Muslim faiths.

The organisation launched its first public rally in Georgetown in June 1990 and drew sizeable crowds to succeeding rallies where it urged people to demand free and fair elections. However, even though it initially stated that its intention was not to become a political movement, it quickly became politicised. In July 1990 it proposed the formation of an interim Government which was to last for two years during which time a new constitution would be drafted and adopted by a referendum to be followed by free and fair elections. GUARD said that since it was not a political movement, it would not participate in this interim Government, but it called on the populace to suggest names to serve on it.

As was expected, the ruling PNC Government was highly critical of this proposal. GUARD itself came under heavy attack from the ruling PNC which saw its association with the PCD in campaigning for free and fair elections as an "unholy alliance of politics and the clergy". One public meeting held by GUARD in Albouystown (in southern Georgetown) was violently broken up in September 1990 by PNC supporters and a number of persons, including a Roman Catholic nun, were beaten and seriously injured.

Source: <http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/chapter21.html>

... a month before the then planned December 1990 elections, Samuel Hinds, who had been selected at a retreat as Chairman of GUARD, was approached at the PPP's request by some of his GUARD associates, and he agreed to accept the position as Prime Ministerial candidate. This resulted in a split within GUARD, and the larger section headed by Hinds, along with individual independents, allied with the PPP and called themselves the Civic group.

But the Jagan/Hinds ticket was not acceptable to the other faction of GUARD led by Gopaul and McCormack who continued to insist that the presidential candidate must come from outside the political parties.

The PPP had always preferred a PCD electoral front and a joint slate. But since its proposals were not acceptable to the other parties, it decided to enter the elections as PPP/Civic joint slate which it viewed as balanced along ethnic and class lines.

The PPP/Civic alliance was eventually approved by the PPP's 24th congress held in August 1991 at the Empire Cinema in Georgetown. At this congress, the PPP also announced it was re-examining its ideological position in the light of changes occurring at that period in the socialist countries. In the report

of the Central Committee, party leader Cheddi Jagan stated: "For parties like ours, inspired by the ideals of a socialist society, new assessments are now necessary.

. . . Our embrace of Marxism-Leninism lies in our commitment to build a society free from exploitation and governed by those who produce the wealth. But we feel it is necessary to make a very studious re-examination of the numerous specific propositions on which the general theory and practice of socialism has been based. It will be necessary to review even some of the deeply entrenched previously unquestioned tenets of scientific socialist theory."

Jagan added: "The Guyanese people cannot be swayed by ideological labels on our party. They trust our party for its commitment to the cause of the Guyanese people. They like the PPP for the humane ideals and principles to which it is committed."

Later, during discussions on the party's programme, Jagan declared that the building of socialism was not at that period on the agenda. He explained that the party was committed to the establishment of a national democratic state which would embrace political and ideological pluralism, political democracy, cultural diversity, racial equality and a mixed economy.

Source: <http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/chapter21.html>

When all the votes [of the October 1992 elections] were finally counted, the final results showed the PPP/Civic winning 162,058 or 53.4 percent of the valid votes, while the PNC received a total of 128,286 or 42.3 percent of the votes. The other parties received the following amounts: WPA - 6,068 (2 percent); TUF - 3,183 (1.2 percent); DLM - 1,557; URP - 1,343; PDM - 298; UJI - 134; NRP - 114; UWP - 77; and NDF - 68.

Out of a total electorate of 384,195, a total of 308,852 (or 81 percent) were cast of which 303,186 were valid. Based on these results, the 53 elected seats in the Parliament were allocated thus: PPP/Civic - 28; PNC - 23; WPA - 1; and TUF - 1.

Source: <http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/chapter22.html>

On 9 October 1992, the leader of the PPP/Civic, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, took the oath as President, thus becoming Guyana's first freely-elected Head of State. At a ceremony at State House in Georgetown witnessed by ex-president Desmond Hoyte and large numbers of PPP/Civic supporters, President Jagan said:

We went to the elections with the slogan: "Time for Change: Time to Rebuild." We have attained the first objective of a change in government. Now, all of us together, whatever our party, political affiliation, whatever our race or ethnicity, whatever our creed, must put our shoulders to the wheel. It is time to embrace each other and work arm in arm to rebuild our beloved Guyana. . . . We must move forward together and make into reality our motto: "One People One Nation, One Destiny.

In this exciting adventure, I expect the fullest co-operation not only of our many friendly countries and our overseas brothers and sisters, but also all progressive minded personalities and organizations: investors, experts and advisers. We do so without rancour, without recrimination, without victimization, without in any way trying to cast blame.

In this regard I hope to develop a constructive relationship with Mr. Desmond Hoyte and the leadership of all parties in order to deepen our democratic process, and accelerate our economic development.

For the first time in 28 years Guyana experienced free and fair elections. The long struggle for the right to freely choose a government was finally won. Democracy which had been snatched away from the people, through a series of rigged elections in 1968, 1973, 1980 and 1985, was once again restored. Nurturing and strengthening this newly won democracy would be their challenge in the years ahead.

Source: <http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/chapter22.html>

Guyana elects at the national level a unicameral legislature (the National Assembly), which has 65 members. Since 2001, the makeup of the National Assembly is as follows: 25 members are elected via proportional representation from 10 Geographic Constituencies and 40 members are chosen also on the basis of proportional representation from National lists named by the political parties. Prior to 2001, 53 members were elected for a five-year term by proportional representation and 12 members delegated by local government councils. The President is elected for a five-year term on the basis of the parliamentary elections.

Executive authority is exercised by the President, who appoints and supervises the Prime Minister and other ministers. However, the President is not elected by direct vote, rather each party presenting a slate of candidates for the assembly must designate in advance a leader who will become president if that party receives the largest number of votes. The President has the authority to dissolve the parliament; however, in contrast to nearly all parliamentary regimes, the Constitution of Guyana does not provide any mechanism for parliament to replace the President during his or her term of office, except in the case of mental incapacity or gross constitutional violations. This makes Guyana an "assembly-independent" regime much like Switzerland.

Only the Prime Minister is required to be a member of the National Assembly. In practice, most other ministers serve as non-elected members, which permit them to debate but not to vote. The President is not a member of the National Assembly but may address it at any time or have his address read by any member he may designate at a convenient time for the Assembly. Under Guyana's constitution, the President is both the Head of State and Head of Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. The military of Guyana consists of the Guyana Defense Force (GDF), which includes Ground Forces, Coast Guard and Air Corps. The GDF was formed on 1 November 1965. Its Commander-in-Chief is the nation's President.

Guyana has a two-party system, which means that there are two dominant political parties, with extreme difficulty for anybody to achieve electoral success under the banner of any other party. The Guyana Elections Commission is responsible for the administration and conduct of elections in Guyana. The last General Elections in Guyana were held on 28 August 2006, which was won by the PPP-Civic Union candidate, Bharrat Jagdeo, with 54.6 percent of the vote. The PNC's candidate won 34 percent of the vote.

Bharrat Jagdeo (born 23 January 1964) has been the President of Guyana since 11 August 1999. Prior to his presidency he was Minister of Finance and became President after Janet Jagan resigned for health reasons; he has since won two elections, in 2001 and 2006.

Since 1992, the **People's Progressive Party** has been the dominant political party and the PNC has been the second-largest party. Hoyte ran for president in 1997 and 2001, and remained the

leader of the party until his death in 2002. The PNC, in 2001, made an alliance with a group called Reform and in the elections that year received 41.7 percent of popular votes and 27 out of 65 seats in the legislature. In contesting the 2006 elections, the party renamed itself the **People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana (PNCR-IG)**. Although it lost five legislative seats, it remains the second-largest political party in Guyana and is led by **Robert H. O. Corbin**, who is leader of the Parliamentary Opposition in Congress.

The highest judicial body is the Court of Appeal, headed by a chancellor of the judiciary. The second level is the High Court (Guyana), presided over by a chief justice. The chancellor and the chief justice are appointed by the President.

Outside of the private sector, free education from nursery school to university was the norm in Guyana until the mid-1990s. The current provision of education is subsidized from nursery through secondary schools, with students now having to pay for tuition at some tertiary institutions. This development reflected a change from the 1970s when Guyana became a socialist-inspired Cooperative Republic. The country's educational policy in the 1970s was intended to broaden access to education; previously, education beyond primary school was expensive and designed primarily for a small elite. In the 1970s, separate schools for boys and girls were made coeducational, and private and parochial schools were incorporated into the public system. However, the nationalization of the schools in Guyana was a very controversial policy, which was met with strong opposition by religious groups that had pioneered educational programs in the nation and owned and administered most of the schools.

Currently, the Guyanese Government owns about 90 percent of the national territory. In coastal areas where most of the population is concentrated, roughly half of the farms are freehold properties. The distribution of lands is characterized by the predominance of small farms of 5-15 acres each. This structure of distribution originated during the colonial period when both the size and number of plots that were allocated to former slaves and indentured workers were restricted. In the post-colonial years, the predominance of small farms has continued to be encouraged by government policies that limit the size of plots that are leased or granted to individuals by the State to a hypothetical minimum that could support a family.

The Roman Catholic Church

Roman Catholicism was first introduced in 1657 by brothers of the Capuchin order, but their mission work did not survive. The Roman Catholic Church was reestablished during and after 1825 with the arrival of several priests – four Irish and one French – who were sent out from Port-of-Spain in Trinidad. The most outstanding missionary of this period was Father J.T. Hynes, a Dominican priest, who arrived in Demerara in 1826. He became the Vicar General in 1833 and returned as Vicar Apostolic ten years later. The Vicariate Apostolic of British Guiana was established by Pope Gregory XVI in 1837 under Father William Clancy. The mission was later entrusted to the Society of Jesus (Jesuits).

In 1841, the urban population of British Guiana included, according to Clancy, 10,000 parishioners composed of “a thousand Spanish Indians together with numerous emigrants from Westphalia in Germany, Madeira, Malta, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Cayenne, Ireland and Italy

[who] professed the Catholic Faith,” as well as about 200 Protestant converts (Dayfoot 1999: 172). The Portuguese-speaking Madeira islanders especially, who began arriving as indentured laborers in 1835, became the strength of the Catholic Church in British Guiana.

In 1900, the Vicar Apostolic resided in Georgetown and his jurisdiction included the island of Barbados in the Windward Islands. At that time, there were only 26 churches and five mission stations, which were served by 17 priests. The total Catholic population was about 22,000. The Diocese of Georgetown was established in 1956. *The Catholic Standard*, published weekly in Georgetown by the Roman Catholic Church, has served the Catholic Community in Guyana since 1905.

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Father Cuthbert Cary-Elwes, an English Jesuit missionary, arrived in Georgetown in 1904. After three years in the headquarters of the British colony, he was sent to the interior of the country, where he established a mission station at Morawhanna, near the border of Venezuela, and engaged in language learning, preaching, catechistic and pastoral work.

In 1909, Father Cary-Elwes traveled through the rainforest to reach the Takutu River in southern Guyana, close to the Brazilian border, where he contacted the Macushi and Wapishana peoples of the Rupununi region. For two years he had to rely on interpreters for communicating with them, but he soon acquired a progressive fluency in the languages that allowed him to make himself understood among people who received him kindly. He built many simple houses and a few churches for the indigenous people who willingly were converted and baptized. His pastoral area covered and estimated 300 square miles (780 km²) through which he walked for hours and days to reach outlying areas and remote villages. After he had acquired a sufficient knowledge of the Makushi language he would sit for long hours into the night, surrounded by men, women and children, talking, singing and instructing them in an informal way.

In January 1923, Father Cary-Elwes had a severe mental breakdown that left him disoriented in the forest for several weeks; he was taken back to Georgetown and repatriated to England. Although he recovered fairly well, a return to Guyana was considered unadvisable. For another 20 years he gave lectures, participated in missions and retreats, and published his notes on the Makushi and other tribal languages of the region. He kept in touch with the Rupununi Mission in Guyana and composed hymns in the indigenous languages. Father Cary-Elwes died in London on 23 August 1945.

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Currently, the **Diocese of Georgetown**, led by Bishop Francis Dean Alleyne, O.S.B., is a suffragan diocese of the Archdiocese of Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. The **Vicariate Apostolic of British Guiana**, established in 1837, became the Diocese of Georgetown in 1956 under Bishop Richard Lester Guilly, S.J., who served the diocese from 1954 to 1972. He was succeeded by Bishop Benedict Singh, who served in that capacity between 1972 and 2003, when the current bishop assumed office.

In 1950, there were 17 parishes in the **Vicariate Apostolic of British Guiana** that were served by two diocesan priests and 33 religious priests who were assisted by 19 male religious and 93 female religious. By 1966, there were 24 parishes with seven diocesan priests and 55 religious priests, in addition to 40 male religious and 77 female religious. Thereafter, the total number of

priests serving the diocese peaked in 1970 with 66 (six diocesan priests and 60 religious priests) but declined to 33 in 2006 (five diocesan priests and 28 religious priests). Likewise, the number of religious workers in the diocese peaked in 1970 with 66 male religious and 81 female religious but had declined to 35 male religious and 44 female religious in 2006. During the same period, the total Catholic population of the diocese declined from 104,000 in 1970 to 60,300 in 2006 due to a variety of factors: emigration due to social and political unrest, the growth of many Protestant denominations, and growing indifference among nominal Catholics.

In 1967, the Catholic Church in Guyana was composed of 60 percent Afro-Guyanese, 20 percent Amerindians, five percent Portuguese, and 15 percent Indo-Guyanese, Chinese or non-Portuguese European ancestry.

By 1985, the Catholic-affiliated population of Guyana had become larger than the Anglican-affiliated population, a trend that has continued to the present day. According to the 2002 Census, an estimated eight percent of the national population was Roman Catholic (60,800) compared to seven percent Anglican (53,200).

The Protestant Movement

Missionaries from the **Netherlands Reformed Church** (Dutch Reformed = *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, NHK*), the **Dutch Lutheran Church** and the **Church of the United Brethren** (Moravian Church) arrived early in the 18th century. The NHK presence began in modern Guyana with the first Dutch immigrants, who arrived as early as 1616. The colony's first church building (Dutch Reformed) was erected in 1720 on Fort Island on the Essequibo River; and Dutch Lutherans built a church at Fort Nassau, about 85 miles up the Berbice River, in 1743, both primarily serving the colonial Dutch community.

The Netherlands Reformed Church became a State Church supported by colonial taxes. By 1736, the first minister, Johannes Fronderdorff, was appointed to serve Dutch colonists in Berbice. After the British took control of the Dutch colonies in 1803, the membership of the NHK rapidly declined. When the government of British Guiana withdrew its financial support for the NHK in 1860, the church ceased to exist.

Even though the first **Evangelical Lutheran church** was established in 1743, it was not until 1752 (?) that the sanctuary was erected. In 1763, the Negro slaves along the Canje and Berbice rivers started an uprising against the Dutch colonists. This culminated in deaths and migration of many Lutherans and other Dutch colonists from out of the Berbice colony. By the 1790s, the Dutch Colony of New Amsterdam at Fort Nassau was relocated to the present-day New Amsterdam location at the mouth of the Berbice River. The Lutherans applied for land and set up the church on the present-day site of Ebenezer Lutheran Church. There is an oral tradition that the original church building at Fort Nassau was shipped out on rafts down the Berbice River and relocated in the town of New Amsterdam.

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Throughout the era of the Dutch the Lutheran Church struggled with the issue of pastoral presence and services. Between its founding in 1743 and 1841, when the last Dutch pastor served, only seven pastors had served the church. Four of those pastors served for a total period of ten years. The longest serving pastor, H.W.P. Junius served from 1830 to 1841. The church was without the services of a pastor for 39 years between 1779 and 1818. In 1841, the Dutch era of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana closed with the departure of Pastor Junius.

Hard times fell upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana with the departure of the Dutch. The old problem of pastoral services continued to plague the church. Matters got worst and the church was on the brink of extinction. By 1875 there were less than one dozen Lutherans in the colony. The church was saved from extinction because of the disagreement over the distribution of its funds among the remaining Lutherans. One aggrieved party complained that she received only \$20.00. The matter reached the courts. The funds were saved from distribution and instead were to be used to appoint and pay a minister – so ruled the courts and saved the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana from sinking into oblivion.

A new day dawned for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana when **Robert John Mittleholzer** became pastor of the Lutheran Church in Guyana. Rev. Mittleholzer became the first Guyanese Lutheran pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana. Rev. Mittleholzer became the first Lutheran pastor of Guyanese birth [African ancestry] in August of 1878. Between 1841 and 1878 the church again experienced a drought of pastors. Under Mittleholzer's pastorate the Lutheran Church grew both in membership and geographical expansion. In the first twelve years of his ministry, the church membership grew from 11 members to 195. Also five others stations were added to the one congregation which made up the church since its founding in 1743. It took 135 years before the church added to its first congregation. By the time of his death in 1913 and after 35 years of service the church grew to 378 members.

Missionary status was a mixed blessing for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana. Many missionaries came to the church, especially in the post-WW II era. Large sums of monies were poured into the church. The church grew and expanded. Also, the church in this period established nineteen schools at the primary and secondary levels through the Berbice and Demerara counties. But by then it had lost its self-sufficiency status. Its growth and expansion was not matched by the development of local human resources to take up the church after the departure of the missionaries. Also the rapid decline of the Guyana economy in the post independence era saw many Guyanese pastors leaving the church and migrating overseas. This was just when the church was again returning to independent status from being a Mission of Lutheran Church in America. As in the beginning so today the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana continues to struggle with pastoral presence and services.

In 1890, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana became affiliated with the **Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America**. This event was against the background of question concerning whether Rev. Mittelholzer was indeed a Lutheran pastor since he was ordained by the London Missionary Society. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana received synodical recognition by the synod. This settled the issues that threatened Rev. Mittelholzer's ministry and the Lutheran Church in Guyana. By the end of Rev. Mittelholzer's ministry in 1913 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana was firmly a mission of the Lutheran Church in America. The first missionary pastor, Rev. Ralph White arrived in Guyana from the USA in 1916. But by then it had lost its self-sufficiency status. Its growth and expansion was not matched by the development of local human resources to take up the church after the departure of the missionaries. Also the rapid decline of the Guyana economy in the post independence era saw many Guyanese pastors leaving the church and migrating overseas. This was just when the church was again returning to independent status from being a **Mission of Lutheran Church in America**. As in the

beginning, so today, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana continues to struggle with pastoral presence and services.

In the era of East Indian immigration in Guyana from 1838, many East Indians came to Guyana. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana extended its work among the East Indian population only from 1915. Services were held in the Hindi language. Many East Indians became Christians through the Lutheran ministry.

Today, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana has thirteen parishes of 48 congregations. Its membership stands at approximately 10,000 baptised. There are thirteen pastors including three from **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**. Some of its ministries include camping ministry, Television Evangelism Ministry, Lay Training Ministry, various outreaches by parishes, a medical outreach under Dr. Richard Young and ministries among women, youth, men and children.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana enjoys many relationships with partners. The church became a member of the **Lutheran World Federation in 1947**. Its historical relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America continues in a healthy way. New areas of engagement between the two churches are explored. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana enjoys the status of being a site where Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ministerial interns may be trained. Recently the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana has entered into a companion synod relationship with **Eastern Synod – Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada**. It already has such a relationship with the **Florida-Bahamas Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana has a long history of 263 years. As history goes this may not be a long time. However, at 263 years the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana is the oldest church in Guyana. Very few if any entity in Guyana enjoys this status of continued existence since 1743. The church is a growing church. It is growing in membership and ministry. Migration however is taking a heavy toll on its membership, yet even in the face of migration its membership is growing, albeit very slowly. The perennial problem of pastoral services continues to plague the church. This is why the establishment of the Lutheran Lay Academy with the help of Lutheran World Federation, Eastern Synod – Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Florida Bahamas Synod, **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America-Division for Global Mission** is of such importance to the future of the church. This institution can be the beginning of addressing the problem of adequate pastoral presence and services.

Source: <http://www.elcguyana.org/History.htm>

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In 1918, the newly-formed **United Lutheran Church in America** (largely German-American, a merger of the General Synod, the General Council, and the General Synod of the South) took over the Pan Lutheran Society work in Argentina and the General Synod work in British Guiana. In 1890, the Rev. John Robert Mittelholzer and the Ebenezer Lutheran congregation became part of the East Pennsylvania Synod of one of the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's** (ELCA) predecessors, the **General Synod**. When the **United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA)** was formed in 1918, British Guiana became one of its mission fields. During the next half century, many Lutheran missionaries were sent to British Guiana.

In 1944, the **Lutheran Church in Guyana (LCG)** became an associate synod of **ULCA**, and in 1950 it was received into membership of the **Lutheran World Federation**. When Guyana

became independent in 1966, the church also became independent. In 1962, the **Lutheran Church in America** was formed by the merger of four Lutheran denominations in the USA, including the ULCA. During the 1970s, the **Lutheran Church in America** began reducing its financial support and mission personnel in Guyana, and its last missionary left in 1983.

The LCG experienced a period of decline and "brain drain" as the country was in the throes of a rapid downward economic spiral and political uncertainty. However, the LCG enjoyed a long and strong tradition of church schools that trained people for active church membership and service. At its peak, the church (with some government assistance) maintained 18 elementary and two high schools.

The LCG is now in the process of rebuilding and restructuring, which will be a slow, arduous and challenging task. Presently, there are eight pastors to serve 48 congregations in fourteen multi-point parishes. Pastors care for their own congregations and serve as "acting" pastors in other parishes, which is a drain on their time and energy. In addition to fully trained pastors, many catechists and ordained deacons provide leadership in the church. The tradition of capable lay leadership is strong in the Lutheran Church in Guyana.

All pastors receive their theological training at the United Theological College of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica, which is within the Caribbean context. In recent years, several strong and capable seminary graduates have taken their places among the church's pastoral staff, bringing new life to the church. The LCG ordained its first female clergy member in 1993.

The Lutheran Church in Guyana, with its 11,000 members, has been notably successful in bridging differences among East Indians, Africans, Chinese, Amerindians and others. Today, the LCG is affiliated with the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)**, which resulted from the merger of several older Lutheran denominations in 1988, including the Lutheran Church in America.

Neither the Reformed Church nor the Lutherans allowed African slaves, Amerindians or other non-white inhabitants to become members of their churches. However, the **Church of the United Brethren (Moravians)**, founded in Bohemia (modern Czech Republic) in 1457, went to Berbice for the express purpose of ministering to the Africans and Amerindians. The **Moravian Church** or *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine* is an evangelical pre-Protestant denomination, whose original name was *Unitas Fratrum*, meaning **Unity of the Brethren**. Moravian refugees from Bohemia relocated on the Berthelsdorf estate of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a nobleman who had been brought up in the traditions of Pietism. Out of a personal commitment to helping the poor and needy, he agreed to a request from their leader (Christian David, an itinerant carpenter) that they be allowed to settle on his lands in Upper Lusatia, which is in present-day Saxony in the eastern part of modern-day Germany. The refugees established a new village called Herrnhut, about two miles (three km) from Berthelsdorf.

The Moravian missionaries were the first large-scale Protestant missionary movement. They sent out their first missionaries when there were only 300 inhabitants in Herrnhut. Within 30 years, the Moravian Church sent hundreds of missionaries to many parts of the world, including the Caribbean, North and South America, the Arctic, Africa, and the Far East. They were the first to

send lay people (rather than clergy) as missionaries, the first Protestant denomination to minister to slaves, and the first Protestant presence in many countries.

The first two Moravian missionaries arrived in Berbice in 1738. After being deterred by plantation owners from their original plan of preaching and winning converts among the African slaves, they decided in 1740 to turn their attention to the native Amerindian peoples in the interior. They established three missions focused primarily on the *Arawak (Lokono)* and *Carib (Karinya)*: **Pilgerhut mission** on the Essequibo River in 1740; **Sharon mission** on the Sarakka River in 1755; and **Ephraim mission** on the Courentyne River in 1757.

Although successful for several decades, the Pilgerhut mission station, along with the Sharon mission, was burned to the ground in 1765 during a massive revolt by slaves in Surinam who turned against all Christians and destroyed numerous plantations on both sides of the Courentyne River. These mission stations were never reopened by the Moravian missionaries. However, the pioneer work by Moravian linguist **Solomon Schumann**, called “the Apostle to the Arawaks” by *Count Nicolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf* (b.1700-d.1760), resulted in the translation of parts of the New Testament into *Arawak* and the preparation of a dictionary and grammar in that language between 1748 and 1760. By 1752 he had baptized more than 250 Amerindians who had settled at the Pilgerhut mission.

Although discouraged by the slave rebellion and the death of some of their colleagues, the Moravian missionaries opened another mission station among the Arawaks, named “**Hope,**” on the Suriname side of the Courentyne River in 1765. However, continued hostility by the Arawaks resulted in youths setting fire to the mission station, which was then abandoned by the missionaries in 1808. It was reestablished on the British Guianese side of the Courentyne River in 1812 and operated until 1816, when the Moravian missionaries abandoned the colony.

Nevertheless, Moravian missionaries returned to Guyana in 1878 at the invitation of Quintin Hogg, a landowner who desired Moravian teachers to educate his employees. They established a mission at Graham's Hall plantation directed to former African slaves. Moravian congregations were eventually started in other locations as well among the Afro-Guyanese.

Today, the membership of the Moravian Church in Guyana is mainly Afro-Guyanese. There are eight Moravian congregations and about 700 communicant members. It has a strong ecumenical orientation expressed through its partnership with the Methodist and Congregational churches in the establishment of a **United Mission** in the bauxite mining districts of Guyana. Five congregations with over 600 members have resulted from this united effort. The Moravian Church is also actively involved in the extension seminary program of the **Guyana Council of Churches**. The Moravian Church, with headquarters in Georgetown, has engaged in mission beyond its borders and has been involved in exploratory visits to French Guiana and Venezuela.

A new era began in these Dutch colonies with the establishment of British control. The non-denominational **London Missionary Society (LMS)**, largely supported by **British Congregationalists**, began work in Demerara in 1808, after a Dutch planter – Hermanus H. Post – invited the LMS to send someone to preach the Gospel to the African slaves on his Le Resouvenir estate, located about seven miles from Georgetown. With Post’s strong support, the first LMS missionary, **John Wray**, made good progress, and a chapel was built on Post’s estate before his death in 1809. The **Rev. John Davies** arrived in January 1809. That same year LMS work was begun in Georgetown, despite opposition from the governor and plantation owners.

Within a few years, four mission stations had been established in the territory, including Berbice and West Coast Demerara.

The “Mission Chapel” (Congregational) was built around 1814 in New Amsterdam, Berbice, under the leadership of the Rev. John Wray. The church was opened in 1819 and was twice enlarged. It was destroyed by fire in 1824 and rebuilt in 1825 and again in 1944. At one time, Mission Chapel probably had the largest seating capacity of all churches in Guyana, with about 1,500 seats.

The mission of the LMS was to convert “pagan Africans” to Christianity. The missionaries selected a group of African converts to be sent to England to be trained as catechists, deacons and teachers for the purpose of spreading Christianity rapidly among African slaves and freedmen. During the ministry of LMS missionary John Smith on the Le Resouvenir estate from 1817 to 1823, several thousand slaves reportedly participated in catechism classes, although the missionaries were not permitted to teach the slaves to read and write on the plantations. Governor Murray, upon the arrival of LMS missionary John Smith, warned him: “If ever you teach a Negro to read and I hear of it, I will banish you from the colony immediately” (Findley 1921:276).

Independent Congregational Ministers: During the periods 1817-1926 numerous events took place which serve to inform and educate generally. **In 1817, Reverend Richard Elliot started the missionary work at Ebenezer Congregational Church.** This led to a Mission house being built at Plantation La Jalousie in 1819. Probably because of his influence and the role he played in the Ebenezer Church, Reverend Elliot in 1823 was arrested and confined in the **Dutch Reformed Church.** This church known today as St. Andrew’s Church, was occupied by government forces. After being released in 1824 he returned to England, this led to the closure of the mission.

The year 1829 marked the rebirth of the mission by **Joseph Ketley [formerly with the LMS]**, after having been closed which for six years. In April 1830, **Michael Lewis**, Ketley’s brother-in-law, took charge. When the **Reverend John Wray [LMS]** left Berbice for England in 1831, Lewis took charge temporarily. Ebenezer Church was then left without a minister.

[The **Rev. Joseph Ketley** (1802-1875) was a mid-19th century Congregational missionary and abolitionist in British Guiana. During the 1830s and 1840s, Ketley worked towards the abolition of slavery and promoted Christian teaching among the African population and the Amerindian tribes along the Essequibo River, while residing at Georgetown, Demerara. On 12 July 1840, he attended the **Anti-Slavery Convention in London.** Until his death in 1875, Ketley was pastor of the **New Providence Chapel**; afterward, his son Joseph Ketley, Jr., succeeded him as pastor.]

James Scott arrived on December 31, 1831, and his family joined him in 1832. Mrs Scott died in 1836. In 1838 Reverend Scott returned to England and returned with a second wife in 1839. The completion work on the church was done by Scott in 1843. A school called Ebenezer Congregational was built in that very year. Many of the villagers attended this school. Reverend Scott returned to England with his wife in 1849. She died in 1852 and again he retired to his place of birth in 1868.

Another minister was appointed to Ebenezer in 1865, but took office in 1867. His first wife died in 1847, and he married for the second time in 1849 to one Jane Buchanan Laing of Den Amstel Village. He was ordained in 1853 and later died in 1888. **Reverend James Lampard Green** succeeded Mr Foreman and renovated the church and installed a pipe organ. He was the last [missionary] of the **London Missionary Society.**

The first local Pastor who took charge of Ebenezer Congregational Church on March 1, 1896, was **Thomas Burchell Glasgow**, ATS. He married one month later to Helena B. Lawrence, he was said to be very brilliant and scholarly. T.B. Glasgow died in 1924. In 1929 **David W. Hamilton Pollard**, B.A. filled the vacancy and left in 1942. The year 1944 **Adam T. Johnson** took charge of the congregation.

Source: <http://www.guyanaundersiege.com/Historical/History%20Den%20Amstel.htm>

Ebenezer Congregational Church: The cornerstone was laid on the 25th April 1955, by his Excellency, Sir Alfred Savage, the then Governor of British Guiana. In 1956 this church was built at Den Amstel [located on the coast, east of the Demerara River, near Georgetown] to replace the one at Blankenburg, which was, then in a state of disrepair. The Reverend Dr. Carlyle Miller was the minister during that time.

Source: <http://www.guyanaundersiege.com/Historical/History%20Den%20Amstel.htm>

The Congregational Union of Guyana (CUG) was formed in 1883, with the support of LMS missionaries and its home office in London. However, when the LMS withdrew its support, the CUG almost ceased to exist. In 1908, the **Colonial Missionary Society** began to support the CUG, which enabled this denomination to survive. In 1942, the CUG began mission work among the Arawaks in the remote interior, and later it joined forces with other denominations to minister to the bauxite miners. The two largest bauxite mines were located at Linden, on the Demerara River, directly south of Georgetown. Since 1966, the CUG has been supported by the **Congregational Council for World Mission** (since 1977, the **Council for World Mission**) in Britain. In 1998, the CUG, with headquarters in Georgetown, reported 40 congregations with 2,300 baptized members.

The Congregational Council for World Mission was formed in 1966 by the merger of the **Commonwealth Missionary Society** and the **London Missionary Society**. The Commonwealth Missionary Society (originally the Colonial Missionary Society) was organized in 1836 to promote Congregationalism in the English-speaking colonies.

The Church of England (Anglican Church) became the Established Church in 1810, although it had been present in the colony since the 1780s. The first Anglican priest to arrive in the Dutch colonies was the Rev. William Baggin, chaplain to Admiral Sir George Rodney, in 1781. British forces returned – Britain, France and Holland were vying for control of the colonies – in 1796 and with them the Rev. Francis MacMahon, Rector of St. John and St. Mark in Grenada and chaplain to the Garrison of Demerary. The Rev. MacMahon was soon holding services in the “public church” of *Stabroek* (later renamed Georgetown). The earliest Register of Baptisms, Marriages & Burials dates back to 6 June 1796.

The Rev. William Straughan replaced MacMahon as chaplain in 1807. He began holding services in the Court House, but he considered it totally inadequate for the growing congregation. On 6 June 1808, a meeting was held in the Marshall Hotel, with the Acting Lt. Governor, General Nicholson, presiding, at which it was determined to build a chapel for divine worship in the town; a committee was appointed to receive contributions for its construction. A Vestry was appointed to govern the affairs of the church. The first St. George’s Chapel was constructed during 1810-1811, measuring 70 feet by 30 feet, and held about 300 people. The Rev. Straughan was the first

Rector. The dedication of “St. George” was used as early as January 1807 in the Baptism Registers.

Financial support from the British colonial government was withdrawn from the Dutch Reformed Church, and it was gradually superseded by the Church of Scotland (Presbyterians), which had been organized in 1766 by several plantation owners. That denomination began to receive state funds in 1837.

Because the Established Church was accused of failing to “reach the hearts and minds of the slave population,” the British Parliament decided in 1823 to appoint two bishops for the West Indies to “advance the cause of religious instruction for the slaves. **Bishop William Hart Coleridge** was named for the See of Barbados and the Leeward Islands (including the Windward Islands, Trinidad and ultimately British Guiana), while **Bishop Christopher Lipscomb** was appointed for Jamaica (including the Bahamas and British Honduras). Bishop Coleridge served in this capacity until his retirement in 1842 for health reasons. It was Bishop Coleridge who dedicated All Saint’s Anglican Church in New Amsterdam on 30 June 1839.

The two bishops overcame many of the difficulties of transition to a new era in the Anglican Church’s administration in the West Indies by obtaining new clergy and other personnel for outreach to the former slaves. Clergy and religious workers were recruited from both England and locally, and the ordination of ministers began to take place for the first time in the West Indies. The bishops established a new program of schools to provide education for the freed slaves and their children. This period was an important turning point in the life of the Established Church, which previously was disparagingly called “the planter’s church.” It began to serve the needs of the growing multi-racial and multi-ethnic population in the post-Emancipation period.

Previously the Church’s work had been limited to one priest in Georgetown (occasionally with an assistant) and one in New Amsterdam. In 1824, four priests were sent by the **Negro Conversion Society** especially to work among the African slaves. The priests were strategically placed: one was put in charge of the Chapel of Ease in St. George’s Parish, the old Court House; one went to Le Ressenouvenir plantation in East Bank Demerara; one to St. Swithin’s in West Bank Demerara; and one to the Essequibo Coast at Anna Regina. In 1826, the **Church Missionary Society** (CMS, founded in 1799 in England by evangelical Anglicans) began sending missionaries to the West Indies, including British Guiana. The CMS worked among the African slaves in Demerara-Essequibo and Amerindians of the interior. However, the CMS withdrew from British Guiana in 1856.

In 1831, the CMS established a mission station at Bartica Point, where a church was erected and instruction was given in the Creole Dutch dialect. The following year, the CMS established another mission south of Pirara between the Essequibo and Takutu Rivers. During 1840 three other CMS missions were established on the Essequibo River: one at Urua on the Rupununi River, another at Waraputa on the Essequibo above the mouth of the Potaro River, and a third at Karia Karia on the lower Essequibo near Fort Island. Between 1840 and 1845, other CMS missions were established on the Waini, Barima and Moruka Rivers, and at Kabakaburi on the Pomeroon River. At all these CMS missions, schools were built and, in addition to religious instruction, academic subjects were taught to the Amerindian children. One of the most

important mission settlements was the Santa Rosa Mission, which was established among a settlement of Arawaks on the left bank of the Moruka River, about 26 miles from the sea.

One of the outcomes of the 1823 slave rebellion was the institution of a system of church administration by the British colonial government that was intended to exclude the Non-Conformist denominations. Some of the parishes were assigned to the Church of England (Anglican) and others to the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), while the Dutch Reformed Church was excluded. This system of parallel Establishment of these two Churches was later modified by a system of “concurrent endowment” and to include some Non-Conformist denominations. This new system – government grants in proportion to the membership for the various denominations – survived after Disestablishment and even beyond Independence in some British West Indian territories.

Between 1824 and 1839, many school buildings were erected chiefly by the Anglicans, the **Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge**, Presbyterians, Methodists and the London Missionary Society. By 1841, there were 101 primary schools that were attended by a sizeable proportion of African children. This expansion was encouraged by the British colonial government, particularly in the period before Emancipation, because it saw the necessity of educating Africans to meet the demands of the civil service and other employment areas following the granting of their freedom.

The “private schools” were maintained through funding from religious denominations, private individuals, estates, and, after 1830, the colonial government. Additional funding from the British Government was made through the **Negro Education Grant**, which was channeled mainly to the Anglican Church.

By Resolution 5 of the Emancipation package of 12 June 1833, Her Majesty's Government agreed to “defray any such expense as he may incur in producing upon liberal and comprehensive principles for the religious and moral education of the Negro population to be emancipated.” The British Government took two years to decide who should administer the **Negro Education Grant**. In the end it was agreed that the government would subsidize the work of the existing religious bodies: the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the London Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society, and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in Foreign Parts, the first Anglican missionary society and supported by voluntary contributions, began its work among the former slaves in the colonies in 1835. Churches and schools were built and administered by this society. In 1840, the Rev. William H. Brett began 43 years of missionary service as a catalyst (layman) among the Amerindians of British Guiana, under the sponsorship of the SPG, at the request of the Rev. H. Duke, Rector of Holy Trinity parish in Essequibo. Brett had an outstanding missionary career and produced numerous books and article about his missionary experiences in British Guiana, including *Indian Missions in British Guiana*, *The Indian Tribes of British Guiana*, *Mission Work among the Indian Tribes of British Guiana*, and *Legends and Myths of Guiana*.

By 1842, the Archdeaconry of Guiana had become a separate diocese under its first Bishop, the Most Rev. William Percy Austin. Today, the **Anglican Church of Guyana** is a Diocese of the **Church of the Province of the West Indies**. The Diocese has three deaneries: Essequibo,

Demerara and Berbice. The Diocese is overseen by the Bishop of Guyana, whose “cathedra” (or chair) is at St. George’s Cathedral in Georgetown. The present Cathedral was dedicated on 8 November 1894.

Queen’s College was founded in August 1844 by Bishop Austin. It was conceived as a grammar school for boys, and its curriculum was patterned after that of English public schools of that period. Queen’s College was a fee-paying school until 1963, when the Common Entrance Examination was introduced and fee-paying was once and for all abolished. It was not until September 1975 that girls were enrolled at Queen’s College for the first time and the curriculum of the school was greatly expanded. Three years later the entire school had become a co-educational institution with girls forming a substantial proportion of the student population.

In January 1939, through the efforts of the Chinese community, **St. Savior's Chinese Anglican Church** was raised to the status of a Parish Church of the Anglican Diocese when it was given its own priest, the Reverend E. C. Lampriere. The word "Chinese" was also omitted from the church's name and became simply St. Savior's Church, but it still continued to be the focal point of the Chinese community. St. Savior's Church is situated at Broad and Saffon Streets in Georgetown. The cornerstone of the "Old" St. Savior's Church was laid on 14 August 1874 to provide a place of worship for the Chinese community of Georgetown where services could be conducted in the Chinese language by a Chinese Catechist. A chancel was added in 1911. In June 1921, on St. John's Day, a dispensation was granted to the **Freemasons of Silent Temple Lodge (Chinese)**, founded in 1908, to hold its first Divine Service at St. Savior's Church. The present St. Savior's Church was dedicated by the archbishop of the West Indies, Dr. John Alan Knight, on Sunday, 14 October 1951.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church of Great Britain had a unique beginning in Guiana. It was first brought to the Demerara colony by two African freedmen from the island of Nevis in 1802 who sought new employment opportunities. Claxton and Powell established the first Methodist Society in the territory of British Guiana, which at one time had an attendance of 70 people under their leadership. The first Methodist missionary to arrive was John Hawkshaw in September 1805 from Barbados, but Governor Beaujon ordered him to leave two or three days later on the same ship that had brought him. The Governor was well aware of the Methodist’s opposition to the Slave Trade, and he wanted to avoid every possible element of disturbance.

However, nine years later, another Methodist missionary – Thomas Talboys who had already pioneered Methodist work in Trinidad beginning in 1809 – was successful in establishing a Methodist Mission in Demerara (1814). Before many months had elapsed a suitable building was acquired in the suburb of Werk-en-Rust for the missionary's work; there a Methodist Society of 71 persons (38 men and 33 women) was established. Through the missionary’s efforts, in a short time the number of Methodist adherents multiplied five-fold. In 1816, the Demerara Methodist circuit reported to the Conference a membership of 364 of which only six were Whites. The Methodist Church was then strengthened by the arrival of British immigrants and additional Methodist missionaries. During the years 1817 to 1823, the Methodist Society grew to over 1,200 people and two circuits were formed, at Georgetown and Mahaica.

Many White residents of Georgetown became angry at the missionary's popularity with the Negroes, and a White mob repeatedly besieged his house and threatened his life. The persecution

was aggravated in 1816 through the circulation of the anti-missionary pamphlet, written in vindication of the slave-holders by Captain Marryat, a member of Parliament and Political Agent for the West Indies. Much of the material of this scurrilous and inflammatory publication had been obtained from Demerara, some of the most injurious statements reflecting pointedly upon Mr. Talboys. Many British colonists came to believe that Talboys was preaching sedition to the slaves. Seeing these accusations in print, and affirmed on the authority of a Member of Parliament, Demerara society accepted them wholesale; the town and colony blazed with indignation.

For three months the Methodist premises were incessantly vandalized; the gates and windows were smashed and furniture destroyed; a hail of stones were cast upon the roof of the mission-house, whose residents were defended by a group of bodyguards of their faithful Colored and Black members, headed by William Claxton. For many months Talboys was unable to show his face in public, especially at night, for fear of assassination.

Mortier found in Georgetown a "commodious chapel, well filled," the congregation composed chiefly of Colored and Black people. A few white men sometimes paid a visit for the purpose "laughing and talking loudly." However, after the magistrates promised protection for the Methodists, slaves flocked in from the surrounding country to hear the preaching, despite the hindrances thrown in their way by their ill-disposed masters. Up to this time few openings were available for visiting the slaves on the plantations. The overcrowded state of the chapel made necessary the erection of a deep gallery, which was carried out after Mortier took charge of the Methodist work. It was not until 1821 that a new and enlarged Methodist chapel was constructed in Georgetown.

Matthew Moss Thackwray assisted Mortier for three years in Demerara. Thackwray broke ground for the mission among a large and neglected population at Mahaica, a coastal town at the mouth of the river of that name that flows parallel to the Demerara River some 30 miles to the east. Amid much opposition Thackwray acquired a suitable building to house his congregation, and in course of time Mahaica became the center of a second Methodist circuit in the province.

The labors of Mortier and Thackwray were followed by George Bellamy and William Ames during 1819-1821. However, both became victims in succession to yellow fever during the epidemic of autumn 1821. Ames was particularly successful for the few months of his serve at Mahaica, where he "watched over the Society with extraordinary faithfulness and diligence."

In 1822, eight years from its foundation, the Demerara Methodist Mission reported a church membership of 1,322, of which all but ten were Negroes or Colored folk. Church growth was furthered by the inflow of immigrants from the West Indies, among whom were a few stray Methodists who were recruited as church members in their new environment.

John Mortier returned to Demerara as Superintendent in 1822; he guarded and nursed the infant church through the times of disturbance with the utmost care, and had the satisfaction of reporting to the Home Committee that out of the 1,216 church members under his oversight only two were even suspected of complicity in the slave rebellion of 1823. He remained at Georgetown for two years, returned for a year in 1833, and was appointed in 1836 as the first chairman of the Demerara District, in which office he served for seven years. Mortier spent nearly half of

his 36 years of ministry in British Guiana. In 1829, the Demerara Circuit reported 2,744 church members. However, the Demerara Mission lost more than a thousand church members between 1829 and 1835, due in large part to the distraction caused among the slaves by the approach of Emancipation in 1834.

The story of the Methodist Mission in British Guiana during 1866-1884 was not a happy one. A series of events arrested progress, although the Mission began this period with a church membership of 3,098 and closed it with 3,654. In 1868, missionary John Greathead established a Home Missionary Society with three objectives: to build an additional much-needed chapel in Georgetown; to promote the evangelization of outlying villages; and to provide for carrying the Gospel to adjacent countries.

At some future time, the Guyana District reported 43 preaching points with about 17,000 regular worshippers and nearly 5,000 members. There were two Methodist circuits in the Guyana District with headquarters in Georgetown: the Georgetown Circuit and the Essequibo Circuit, which included the Pomeroon mission and the Capoey East Indian mission. However, today, the Guyana District only reports six stations: Berbice, Essequibo, Friendship, Georgetown, Mahaica and West Demerara.

Religious persecution of Non-Conformists (Moravians, LMS and Methodists), including missionaries and their converts, had the unintended result of intensifying their zeal and attracting others to their cause. However, these tensions in British Guiana subsided after the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1823, together with partial Emancipation in 1834 and full Emancipation in 1838. Nevertheless, Governor Murray's delay in proclaiming the contents of one of the British Government's dispatches in 1823 led to a slave revolt in the Demerara region near the Le Resouvenir estate where John Smith of the LMS was engaged in ministry among the slaves. The slaves in East Demerara were convinced that the Governor and their masters were withholding their freedom from them and many of them felt they had no other option than to rise up against those who were not carrying out the King's orders.

The slave rebellion began on 18 August 1823. The uprising collapsed very quickly since the slaves, despite being armed, were poorly organized. A group of soldiers commanded by Colonel Leahy clashed with about 2,000 African slaves at Bachelor's Adventure and "savagely crushed them and more than 250 were killed." Some who escaped were hunted down by Amerindian slave-catchers and shot. Quamina, one of the main leaders, was shot dead by Amerindian slave-catchers in the backlands of Chateau Margot and his body was later publicly hanged. Another leader, Jack Gladstone, was later arrested and also hanged.

Out of an estimated 74,000 slaves in the united Colony of Essequibo-Demerara, about 13,000 took part in the uprising. However, out of the 350 estates in the Colony, only about 37 were involved in the violence. No doubt, many who did not take part sympathized with the rebels and shared their suspicion that the planters would spare no efforts to prevent them from obtaining their freedom.

Smith was arrested, tried on the charge of aiding and abetting the slave rebellion, and condemned to death, with a recommendation for mercy; however, he died of pneumonia in prison in February

1824. During the trial, an Anglican minister, W. S. Austin, testified as a witness for the defense and argued that Smith's preaching and teaching had in fact "prevented a dreadful effusion of blood" during the slave revolt (Dayfoot 1999:162).

The Presbyterian Church (Church of Scotland) began work in British Guiana in 1816 with the arrival from Scotland of the Rev. Archibald Brown in September to pastor a new church among Scotsmen after they acquired an unfinished church building in 1815 from the Dutch Reformed. The first Scottish Presbyterian presence in the colony began in 1766 with the arrival of planters from Scotland, who were led by Lachal Cuming, called the "Patriarch of Scotland in Guiana." Although many of the Scottish church members were slave owners, they allowed Africans to worship with them as early as 1821. Unlike the NHK, the Presbyterians admitted slaves into their congregations and the children of the slaves were baptized. Nevertheless, the English and Scottish colonists were not outspoken against slavery and some discriminatory practices, such as special seating for European colonists, were permitted in the Presbyterian churches.

The Presbyterian Church of Guiana (PCG) was formally established on 9 February 1837, during a session at St. Andrew's Kirk, and the Westminster Confession was adopted. By the mid-1800s, the Dutch Reformed members were absorbed by Presbyterian and Anglican churches. The Presbyterians were partially supported by government grants until 1945. On 25 May 1967, the Church of Scotland dissolved the presbytery, which then became an autonomous church body. The PCG, with headquarters in Georgetown, reported 25 churches with 3,250 members in 1998.

The PCG organized the **Presbyterian Missionary Society** in 1860, which employed several East Indian catechists to do missionary work among the East Indians in British Guiana. In 1880, the Rev. Thomas Slater, member of the Presbyterian Mission Society, invited the Rev. John Morton in Trinidad to send Canadian missionaries to work among the East Indians in British Guiana, who had been imported to replace the former slaves. Although many East Indians did not want to be associated with the colonists' plantations, the Canadian Presbyterian work among the East Indians proved to be quite fruitful, growing to be larger than the Scottish Presbytery.

The post-Emancipation years were a period of great activity for the Protestant denominations at work in the colonies of Berbice and Demerara-Essequibo, which were united as British Guiana on 21 July 1831. The evangelical missions, as well as the Church of England, were eager to evangelize and educate the former slaves, which had not been possible previously due to prohibitions by the colonial government and opposition from the plantation owners who feared slave rebellions. The missionaries continued to gain converts among the blacks, the people of color (mixed black and white), and the small white population during this period, but the post-Emancipation enthusiasm cooled after 1845 when British Parliamentary grants for West Indian education ceased and the Negro Education Grant was used up by 1850.

The Christian Brethren of Guyana are an indigenous body that did not come into being as a result of foreign missionary activity, but had its beginning at the Demerara colony in 1826-1827 when a clergyman of the Anglican Church in Georgetown, the **Rev. Leonard Strong**, without any knowledge of a similar movement elsewhere, "launched out in faith as a result of diligent and independent study of the scriptures, and found it impossible to reconcile what he learnt with his

position in the Church of England” (Chapman 1906: 7). The Plymouth Brethren movement began in Dublin, Ireland, around 1830, and soon spread to Britain and around the world. The division of the Plymouth Brethren into the Open Brethren and Exclusive Brethren subgroups took place in 1848.

The Brethren Assembly at Victoria (originally a plantation called Northbrook, located about 18 miles east of Georgetown on the coast) was formed very early in the history of the Christian Brethren movement, and it is believed to be the original starting point, where Leonard Strong began his ministry after leaving the Anglican Church. It is known that Daniel French served there in 1842, before going on to the Essequibo District. The building now used as a meeting room was previously used by Dutch owners as a rest house for laborers on their cotton plantation. It was purchased from them by these early Brethren.

The mention of **Leonard Strong** in connection with the Brethren Movement recalls the interesting circumstance that he was “breaking bread” in far-away Georgetown in British Guiana some time before the first public meeting of early brethren at Dublin in 1830. Previous to this time he was holding the position of Rector of a parish in British Guiana, with a salary of £800 a year. A diligent study of the Scriptures entirely changed his outlook, and acting independently, with no other guide save the Word, he left the Church of England, giving up a stipend which was his sole income, together with a comfortable Manse, that he might meet simply for worship with those who, through his faithful ministry, had embraced the Gospel of Christ. Considerable numbers followed him, and it is said that at the first meeting, which was held in a large shed used in connection with the process of coffee-drying, nearly two thousand believers were present. From that meeting other assemblies were formed which continue to the present time.

Born in 1792 [in England], Leonard Strong entered the Royal Navy before reaching the age of thirteen. He served as a midshipman, and during the French and American wars saw much active service, being present at several engagements. It was the upsetting of a shore-going boat in the West Indies, when he narrowly escaped being drowned, that brought before the youth his lost condition as a sinner before God, and ultimately led to his conversion. He relinquished his position in the Navy soon afterwards and returned to England.

With the desire to become a missionary Mr. Strong entered the Church of England and, after studying at Oxford, was ordained as curate of Ross-on-Wye, but he was unable to settle down in this quiet parish. What Leonard Strong had seen of the West Indies’ urgent need of the Bible filled him with an unquenchable longing to carry the Gospel across the seas. He therefore made application, and on receiving an appointment the young clergyman set sail for British Guiana, where he was installed as Rector of a parish there. That was in the year 1826. An ardent Bible student and a fearless preacher, his ministry was used of God in pointing large numbers to the Saviour, and in drawing many of the native Christians to his side. His work among the slaves, whom he sought to liberate from sin’s bondage as well as lighten the oppression of the cruel taskmasters, brought him in conflict with the planters, who threatened to shoot him if he persisted in his preaching. This he continued without abatement, and the authorities stepping in, the offending clergyman was removed to Georgetown, where, as we have seen, he began a work, the fruits of which remain even to this day.

Source: <http://www.plymouthbrethren.org/article/5986>

After serving in British Guiana for 22 years, Strong returned to England in 1849 and settled at Torquay, an ancient seaport on the coast of Devon. There, with his missionary zeal, he provided leadership for the establishment of the Warren Road Gospel Hall.

The Camp Street Brethren Assembly (Bethel) in Georgetown produced outstanding native Brethren, who in fellowship with missionaries from England have not only maintained a large membership and attendance, but have been a source of assistance to smaller assemblies in the country. From the time of Strong's return to England, the Georgetown Assembly as always benefited by having senior missionary Brethren stationed there, and it seems to have reached its greatest spiritual prosperity during John Rhymer's ministry. At the time of his return to England the number in fellowship there was 700.

Two "Brethren Assemblies" established by Strong – one at Peters Hall, East Bank, Demerara and the other at Camp Street in Georgetown – were still in existence in 1977. Historian E. M. Chapman wrote: "It was a test of faith as to whether descendants of slaves severely handicapped by lack of education and suffering from the class prejudice that reigned in that day could understand and practice the ideals taught by the apostles" (Chapman 1977: 7).

The local Brethren Assemblies receive all those whom they believe have received Christ; all born-again believers who are holy in life, sound in doctrine and not under discipline by some other assembly. They believe that every believer should engage in Christian Service. The idea of a clergyman who does the religious duties for the congregation, of preaching the sermons, baptizing converts, conducting communication services, etc., is unacceptable. According to Chapman (1977: 8):

The bishops, also called elders and overseers, are called to feed the flock and they must be fitted for that office by the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28).

The Deacons are to administration the business and financial affairs of the church and must be elected to that office; but, the elders, otherwise called bishops or overseers or presbyters, are pointed out to the church by a senior and accepted by the church on his fitness for that office.

In general, the main characteristics of the Brethren Assemblies are: avoidance of traditional religious symbols; a fellowship of believers, not membership; no professional clergy; no salaried ministry; weekly remembrance meetings; and no solicitation of funds. They are ultra-conservative New Testament Christians who are described as Fundamentalists and Dispensationalists.

The Chinese Baptist Church of British Guiana was founded by Mr. Lough Fook about 1860, at Peter's Hall, East Bank, Demerara. The founder came from China with the main purpose of spreading the gospel among the Chinese who came from China to work on the sugar estates, as there was no one who was looking after the spiritual needs of these people, who could neither speak nor understand English. The work soon prospered and another assembly was formed at Leonora, West Coast Demerara, with Mr. Lee-A-King as Pastor. Other assemblies were established at Camuni Creek on the Demerara River, and at Bagotsville, West Bank, Demerara.

Others who assisted in the work at different times were Lee Ching, Chung-A-Hing and Chung-Man-Chu. The descendants of the Chinese from China went to schools where English was taught; consequently, they soon learned to speak and write English fluently so that by 1920 there was no longer a need to have a Chinese-speaking Pastor.

Eventually, the meeting room at Camuni Creek was closed, while those at Bagotsville and Peter's Hall were sold to the Christian Brethren. Since 1932, the Assembly at Leonora has been in fellowship with the Brethren and has opened its doors to everyone.

During 1896, a Brethren assembly was organized on the West Bank of the Demerara River among Brethren who had heard the gospel from Joseph Collier, who was one of the first missionaries in the colony after Strong left in 1849. On 6 June 1897, one year after this small

work started on that side of the river, the Lord's Supper was observed for the first time; and the following day the first eight converts were baptized. An assembly of 16 believers was formed under the oversight of Brother Bullen, and the work took on a permanent character.

Two miles north of La Retraite, in a more central part of the district, there was a Chinese Baptist meeting room and Mission Home, which had been loaned to Bullen for seven years before his death in 1918. After his death, the properties were sold to the Brethren; his wife carried on the work at La Retraite, where she resided in the Mission Home until her death in 1974.

In February 1903, it was reported that a building (Bethel Assembly) to accommodate 120 persons was constructed for the Women's Bible Class on Camp Street, Georgetown. This building was to be the property of the **English Missionary Society** with headquarters in Bath, England. Missionaries serving in British Guiana at that time included: John Rhymer, Thomas Wales, Gordon Smith, Albert Webster, Ronald Aldrich and Robert McLucky.

Associated with missionary Rhymer was an Afro-Guyanese named Henry Isles who served principally in Georgetown, but was also active in the country Assemblies. He "felt called" to full-time service and depended on support from his brethren for his sustenance. He and his family lived at the Camp Street Mission House, along with Mr. and Mrs. Rhymer, and continued to live there until his death in 1909.

Another outstanding Afro-Guyanese associated with this Assembly was William Chesterfield Willock, who died in 1935. He was converted through the preaching of Rhymer in 1891, and for 43 years he "laboured in the Lord's vineyard" and was accepted as a preacher and teacher in the assemblies of the coastlands that he visited, as well as in the interior. He travelled from the Barima River in the North West District to the Potaro center of the gold-mining industry, which required hundreds of miles of travel on those missionary journeys. He also visited New Amsterdam. Among other prominent Brethren who were highly respected, because of their exemplary character and godly counsel, were Joshua Austin and Augustus Ashby. These Brethren worked with Rhymer, and later with Mr. Wales who succeeded him. Consequently, Brethren in the country districts looked to the Georgetown Assembly for advice and counsel.

In 1914, a dispute arose between the **Camp Street Georgetown Assembly** and other assemblies. Eight Assemblies in the Demerara District decided to be legally incorporated for the purpose of a better control of their property, and in the ordinance they were described as "a religious denomination or sect commonly called "Christian Brethren". The Assembly at New Amsterdam immediately wrote protesting against the Camp Street Assembly's oversight of other leaders in this movement, stating that they had taken a sectarian ground, and by so doing had abandoned their historic nondenominational stance. This resulted in a division in the New Amsterdam Assembly, which continued until 1923; some of the believers supported the action of those who had become incorporated as a sect, and others who maintained that "they had denied their Lord."

Mr. J. T. Muller was a missionary in Essequibo District between 1920 and 1926, when he came to the Brethren Assembly at La Retraite; he lived at the mission house and served there and at Zeeburg. He was instrumental in building up both churches. However, in 1928, he left to become a pastor with the Pilgrim Holiness Church.

After the Rhymer returned to England, Thomas Wales succeeded him. He had a reputation for strict discipline and impartiality, which earned him great respect. After his death he was succeeded by Mr. C. Gordon Smith who, later while in England, died on 11 September 1955.

By 1955, the following Brethren Assemblies had been established in British Guyana: in the Demerara District at Georgetown, Broadcast, Peter's Hall; in the Essequibo District, beginning in the 1850s: Maria's Lodge, Queenstown, Henrietta, Danielstown and Bounty Hall; east of the Demerara River and in Berbice District: Buxton-1879, Eldorado, New Amsterdam-1880, Plaisance-1892, Kitty-1904 and Sheet Anchor; others include Lilydale, Alexanderville, Craig, Supply, Hyde Park, Patentia (mostly East Indians), East Ruimveldt (Maranatha), Campbellville (Bethany), Windsor Forest-1935, Leonora-1932, La Retraite, Zeeburg-1923, Meadow Brook Gardens-1966, Aratak, Bagotville, Christianburg (1907, Faith Gospel Chapel); assemblies in the Upper Demerara River area include Mahaicabally (1907), Issurn (now Endeavour), Wismar Hill, Dunoon, Coomacka, Ituni (1971, a mining area), and Weronie. In the region of Rupununi in the Upper Essequibo River basin, many people were converted under the ministry of "Brother Dainty" and admitted into fellowship; churches have sprung up among the Macushi Indians at Moco Moco and Napi; and in the north, south and extreme south among the Wapishana and Wai-Wai tribes.

By 1870, the Protestant denominations, as well as the **Roman Catholic Church**, in British Guiana were immeasurably stronger than they were during the days of slavery. Among the more interesting indigenous churches (syncretistic) was the **Hallelujah Church** that emerged in the interior in the 1870s under the leadership of a new prophet named Abel.

Other Protestant denominations that arrived in British Guiana prior to 1900 were the **African Methodist Episcopal Church** (1880), **Canadian Presbyterians** (1885), the **Seventh-day Adventist Church** (1887), **The Salvation Army** (1887), and the **National Baptist Convention** (1899).

1880 - African Methodist Episcopal Church, Guyana Conference. Today, there are 10 affiliated churches: four in Georgetown; one in Linden, Gururu, Essequibo, East Bank Essequibo; and two in undefined locations: Hickman's Tabernacle AMEC and Franklin Talbot AMEC.

The Presbyterian Church of Canada sent the Rev. John Gibson to British Guiana in 1885, where he began church work among East Indians in Demerara. He was succeeded by the Rev. J. B. Cooper, who arrived in Better Hope, located in the Pomeroon-Supenaam region, in 1895. Because Cooper spoke fluent Hindi, he was able to communicate with the East Indians employed on the plantations, and some of them responded to his message and joined the Presbyterian Church. By 1905, Cooper had expanded his work to all three former Dutch colonies, now unified as British Guiana.

Until 1945, the Canadian Presbyterians worked almost exclusively with the East Indians on the sugar plantations. Local churches and schools were established, but the work suffered from the frequent turnover of missionaries in British Guiana. In 1945, the work was organized as the autonomous **Canadian Presbyterian Church in British Guiana**, and in 1961 the name was changed to the **Guyana Presbyterian Church**. In 1998, this presbytery, with headquarters in New Amsterdam, reported 44 congregations with 1,890 baptized members.

1887 - The Seventh-day Adventist Church. Elder G. G. Rupert, commissioned by the General

Conference in Battle Creek, Michigan, left New York City on 18 January 1887 accompanied by George King, the pioneer SDA canvasser. They arrived in Georgetown at the end of the month and through their efforts about \$500 worth of books and periodicals were sold and a church and Sabbath School were organized. While in Guyana, Rupert baptized thirty persons and the Sabbath School was organized with a membership of forty.

However, the denomination's first mention of Adventist work in Guyana was in 1883, when W.J. Boynton of the International Tract and Missionary Society (ITMS) office in New York City made a specific reference to SDA work in Guyana, indicating that SDA teachings first found its way to Guyana through Joseph Brathwaite who went there to distribute SDA literature and led several persons to embrace the SDA message.

In November 1885, R. L. Jeffrey from British Guiana attended the annual meeting of the ITMS in Battle Creek, Michigan, and reported that there were "over twenty persons observing the Sabbath" and called for ministerial help. A committee recommended that the *General Conference* look into the matter of sending a missionary to Guyana.

On 30 September 1886, the quarterly meeting of District No. 1 of the South American branch of the ITMS was convened at New Amsterdam, Berbice. Branches of the society had already been formed in Demerara and Berbice counties. By the end of the year thirty-seven persons were considered to be church members.

In 1891 William Arnold, an American colporteur, spent some time canvassing in Guyana and sold several hundred books. In addition, supplies of literature continued to arrive in the country including issues of *Signs, Present Truth, The Youth Instructor* and *Good Health*. In 1892, L. C. Chadwick made a Caribbean tour on behalf of the ITMS, and spent 22 days in which he baptized 16 people in Georgetown, including three Hindus and eight persons in a region 85 miles from Georgetown. In Georgetown, Chadwick ordained elders and deacons at the church, which in May had a membership of 41.

Warren G. Kneeland and his wife arrived in Guyana in December 1893 as the first resident SDA minister. The absence of a minister based in the territory undoubtedly contributed to the instability of the church. Kneeland reported that death and apostasy had "taken many away," and stated that he was obliged to "dis-fellowship quite a number for various causes." Among those identifying with the church were an Anglican minister who was baptized, and Peter Fon, an East Indian Governor, who attended Sabbath services at Bootooba, the location of the second SDA church in Guyana, which Kneeland had organized in July 1895. In this church there were three Amerindians. Efforts by a Guyanese SDA resulted in work being started among the Amerindian tribes living near the mouth of the Essequibo River. A church was dedicated in December 1896, but shortly afterward a smallpox epidemic swept through the Amerindian settlement. Consequently, the Amerindians moved further up the Essequibo and located at Tapakuma Creek where they erected a new church building. By 1897, in addition to the churches at Georgetown, Bootooba and Essequibo, there were groups of SDA members in Friendship, East Coast Demerara and New Amsterdam in Berbice.

Guyana was part of the East Caribbean Conference, organized in 1903, with headquarters in Trinidad. In 1906, SDA work in the Caribbean was reorganized and the British Guiana

Conference was formed consisting of 12 churches and a membership of 350.

In 1908, R. N. Graves, a Guyanese SDA returned home with a British medical diploma and practiced medicine for some time. Educational work also began early in the century. By 1909 three schools were operating, two near Georgetown, and one in the Essequibo area.

The SDA church developed a special interest in the Guyanese Amerindians through the ministry of Elder Ovid E. Davis, an American missionary who pioneering efforts deep in the interior. Davis died among the indigenous people at Mt. Roraima on the Guyana-Venezuela-Brazil border. The following quotation describes his work and the faithfulness of the Amerindians even without a missionary.

He stayed with them for a time, built three humble churches, and baptized 300 people. They had not yet learned very much when Elder Davis became ill and died there among them. They lovingly buried him, and then continued as best they could in the things he taught them, remembering his promise that someone else would come to teach them. They waited and waited. The Arekunai turned down many offers of the Catholic Church to come in and teach them believing that Elder Davis' successor would come. After twelve years, during which time there still had been no funds to send a worker to them, their chief hiked weeks to Georgetown to plead with the mission office for a worker.

In 1925, two SDA missionaries, C.B. Sutton and W.E. Baxter, visited the "Davis Indians" and located the grave of Elder Davis. In 1927, the Mt. Roraima Indian Mission was organized but it was absorbed within the Guiana Conference before being reopened again in 1938. It consisted of groups of members of Wakipata Mission, Kurupung and Mazaruni River. Roy Brooks, a native of Nicaragua, left Guiana in 1961 after spending 30 years mostly with the "Davis Indians." Later, one "Davis Indian," Lloyd Henrito, became an ordained SDA minister in Guyana. Today, there is a large Adventist mission at Mt. Roraima, with a landing strip that has reduced travel to this remote area from weeks to a few hours.

SDA work continued to grow in Guyana, and at the beginning of 1917 there were groups meeting in 15 places, many as full-fledged churches and a few as "companies" (missions). Among the 15 were three groups of Amerindians, including one at Tapakuma where there was a membership of 40 and a school conducted by William Lewis. Among the ministers in Guyana at the time was Trinidadian-born Adolphus Eleazar Riley. In the 1930s there were several workers from elsewhere in the Caribbean, who were based in Guyana. These included the Barbadian E. S. Greaves and the Trinidadian Charles Manoram.

In 1935, Guyanese William A. Osborne was among three students in the first twelfth grade graduating class at Caribbean Union College in Trinidad. In 1944, Tobago-born evangelist Victor McEachrane became perhaps the first evangelist in Guyana, baptizing 110 persons in a crusade on the East Coast of Demerara.

In 1945, the British Guiana Mission was organized and Dutch Guiana was separated and known as the Suriname Mission. In the mid-1950s, medical work by Adventists began in Georgetown and the Davis Memorial Hospital was opened in 1955. A portion of the worldwide Thirteenth

Sabbath Offering overflow in 1960 was used to help finance a new hospital, which was officially opened in 1967.

By 1973, the SDA Church had been operating eleven elementary schools, four of them state-aided, and one secondary school. However, in 1976, the government of President Forbes Burnham took full control of the education system and all denominational schools were closed.

Guyana received Conference status in 1976 and Roy McGarrell was elected its president. Since then, Gordon Martinborough, Gershom G. Byass, Hilton Garnett, Lindon Gudge and Philip Bowman have served as presidents. The current president is Dr. Hilton Garnett, who was elected to serve at the Conference's Quadrennial Session, held 16-19 May 2007.

Today, the Guyana Conference, with headquarters in Georgetown, consists of more than 50,000 believers who are distributed in 203 congregations that are organized into 24 pastoral districts. This jurisdiction is part of the **Caribbean Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**, which stretches from St Croix in the north to Suriname in the south.

1895 - The Salvation Army (SA) from England “opened fire” in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1887, and then spread throughout the island of Jamaica and to British Guiana in 1895. Adjutant and Mrs. Edward Widgery, along with Lt. George Walker, arrived in the colony on 24 April 1895.

“Lighthouse Alley” was the area in which the first SA open-air meeting was held, while familiar buildings such as “Hand of Justice” Society Hall along with the “Rose of Sharon” Hall and the majestic Town Hall were all used for conducting of indoor meetings that attracted large crowds of people from different walks of life and from whom many were converted and became SA soldiers.

The early SA growth and development was so swift and rapid that SA Headquarters in London was forced to send a very high-ranking official to oversee the situation. However, the mission and motive of the SA movement were grossly misunderstood by the State, the government, the other Christian denominations, and even the Police. As a result, the SA pioneers, Adjutant and Mrs. Widgery and Lieutenant Walker were imprisoned for preaching the Gospel on the street corners.

Major Alexander Ghurib Das (“Servant of the Poor”), a Scotsman, came to the colony particularly to evangelize a growing East Indian community, which resulted in the formation of two main divisions: the East Indian Division and the West Indian Division.

As an organization, the SA has always identified with the poor and destitute, and by its doctrines, principles and general behavior has made known its non-interference in political matters; but it was always prepared to be firmly on the side of justice and fair play by preaching a holistic message of “soup, soap and Salvation.”

An integral part of its history and mission of service was the “Baker Shelter,” “Night Shelter” and “Seamen’s Hostels” in Kingston, Georgetown and New Amsterdam, respectively; and more so, the famous “Luncheon and Tea Rooms” managed for many years by Sister Lucille Isaacs in the heart of the city.

In addition to its being known and respected for its Ministry of Music and Song, the SA has been involved with ministries in prisons and probation programs, and at the Remedial School for Girls,

along with the Voluntary Aftercare Program, the Tuberculosis Sanitarium, the Leprosarium, and also the Mental Asylum.

The international spirit and content of The Salvation Army allowed for Offices (Ordained Ministers of Religion) of varying “shades” and nationalities to be appointed right through the century to manage the affairs of the movement here in the Country and because proper homework has done and performance was considered creditable, it was no surprise when four of the nationals, Brig. Clement Moonsawmy, Cpt. David Edwards, Cpt. Mortimer Jones, and Maj. Cleo Damon in that order, were accorded that honor.

The work of the Salvation Army in Georgetown was so contagious that it soon affected the lives of people at Plaisance, Buxton and Mahaicony; on the East Coast of Demerara and in Den Amstel on the West Coast of Demerara; at Vergenoegen on the East Bank of Essequibo; New Amsterdam in Berbice; at Wismar and Mackenzie (now Linden) up the treacherous Demerara River; and at Bartica on the Essequibo River.

David Edwards emerged from very humble beginnings and became a fine school teacher when he felt called to full-time service as a Salvation Army Officer in 1960. Later, he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel and later Colonel, thereby becoming the first Guyanese and the youngest Caribbean person to be appointed to those high ranks and to hold the important office of Chief – Secretary, in 1982. Colonel Edwards became the first Guyanese and Caribbean national to be appointed Territorial Commander of Central America and Caribbean Territory, in 1990.

1899 - National Baptist Convention, Foreign Board. Two Afro-Guyanese Baptist churches were established in Georgetown (Bethel Baptist in 1899 and Nazareth Baptist in 1902), and a third at Dalgin on the Demerara River; however, the relationship with the U.S. denomination ended in 1928.

During the 20th century, numerous other U.S.-based Protestant denominations arrived in Guyana, but only a few prior to 1920: African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (1900); Seventh-day Adventist General Conference (1906); International Apostolic Holiness Union (1908 – became the Pilgrim Holiness Church in 1922 and the Wesleyan Church in 1968); Christian Church Mission Board (1908); Seventh-Day Baptist Church (1913)

1900 - The Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, formally organized in New York City in 1821 by Afro-Americans, arrived in British Guiana in 1900. Today, the Guyana Annual Conference of the AME Zion Church reports 11 organized churches, all located on the Atlantic coast. This jurisdiction is part of the Mid Atlantic I Episcopal District of the AME Zion Church, which includes the Annual Conferences of New Jersey, Ohio, Allegheny, Trinidad-Tobago, Barbados and Guyana.

1911 - Afro-Christian Convention (organized in 1892 in North Carolina). About 1900-1901, the Rev. J. A. Johnson of Georgetown, Demerara, a Baptist minister, was led to declare himself a "Christian" simply and at once began to preach the position and principles of the “Christian Church” founded by ministers Thomas Campbell and Barton W. Stone in Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The Stone-Campbell movement began as two separate threads, each without knowledge of the other, during the Second Great Awakening in the early 19th century, and was later called the Restoration Movement. Having no fellowship and no church building, Johnson began preaching on the street corners, and for year several held services in two or three sections

of Georgetown, in the open air, where “as many as two thousand listeners nightly frequented his meetings.” Finally, after making great sacrifices, Johnson was able to organize a church of about 220 members in Georgetown.

Johnson appealed to the **American Christian Convention** in 1910 and 1912 for assistance, and a committee was named to investigate the situation in British Guiana. He also made contact with the **Afro-Christian Convention** (founded in 1892 in North Carolina) and requested its assistance.

In the late spring of 1911, Rev. S. A. Lowell, accompanied by Rev. N. E. Higgs [both representing the American Christian Convention], went to British Guiana, ordained Mr. Johnson as a minister of the gospel, licensed four others as preachers, organized the **Demerara Christian Conference**, put several churches in order, helped to organize a Woman's Missionary Society, and in general much strengthened the work. Source:

http://www.archive.org/stream/christianannualf1913dayt/christianannualf1913dayt_djvu.txt

Sometime during 1910-1911, the Afro-Christian Convention voted to raise \$1,000 for the work of the Christian Church in Demerara, whereas the Mission Board of the American Christian Convention in 1912 determined “at this time become responsible for a new mission field” and recommended that the Afro-Christian Convention continue to support the work in Demerara. However, the Mission Board “offered its assistance to the Afro-Christian Convention by way of literature, counsel, forwarding of funds, or like service.”

By 1916, according to the minutes of the **Afro-Christian Convention**, there were seven regional conferences in the USA, four mission churches in British Guiana, South America, and one mission church in Trinidad, British West Indies. The Afro-Christian Convention (aka *Afro-Union Christian Convention*) experienced significant growth and expansion in the USA under the leadership of the Rev. Smith A. Howell, who was elected president in 1914 and served in that office for 20 years.

This denomination was a constituent member of the General Convention of the Christian Church, which united with the **General Council of Congregational Churches** in 1931 to form the **Congregational Christian Churches** that operated in the USA from 1931 through 1957. The **Congregational Christian Churches** merged with the **Evangelical and Reformed Church** (formed in 1934 as the result of another merger) in 1957 in Cleveland, Ohio, to form the **United Church of Christ (UCC)**, but the status of the affiliated Afro-Christian churches in Guyana is unknown. Source: <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories/the-afro-christian-connection.html>

Holiness preachers Moulton and Taylor conducted special services in the Georgetown Town Hall during their visit to British Guiana in 1908. **The Pilgrim Holiness Church** (name adopted in 1922 but whose origins date to 1897 in Cincinnati, Ohio) was subsequently established by early missionaries of the **International Apostolic Holiness Union**, who went out as faith missionaries to the West Indies and South America, including British Guiana. Harry and Elder Louise Norton were pioneers of the Pilgrim Holiness Church in Guyana.

The Pilgrim Holiness Church merged, in 1968, with the **Wesleyan Methodist Church**, organized in May 1841, and was renamed **The Wesleyan Church**, now with world headquarters in Fishers,

Indiana. In January 1982, a group of former Pilgrim Holiness/Wesleyans members met with the District Superintendent in the USA to discuss the possibility of sending aid to needy projects in Guyana. The outcome was the establishment of the **Pilgrim Overseas Missionary Society (POMS)**, a non-profit organization providing assistance to development projects in Guyana, including providing scholarships for children, and support for reconstructing churches and Christian Camps.

Today, there are 13 organized churches in the Demerara District, two churches in West Coast and West Bank, four in Berbice District, six in Essequibo District, and three in the Interior Regions for a total of 28. The Wesleyan Bible College was established in Staebrock, Georgetown, prior to 1994, now with satellite campuses throughout the Caribbean. In 2003, Miss Doris Wall was the last U.S. Wesleyan Church missionary left in the interior of Guyana, having lived her life with Amerindian peoples there since 1967 as a nurse, midwife, literacy worker, linguist, Bible translator and educator.

1913 – The Seventh-Day Baptist Church was founded by a native of Barbados, T. L. M. Spencer, a former member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in his country. He founded his first church in British Guiana in 1913, then appealed to the Seventh-Day Baptists in the USA for support and they helped him acquire property for a church building. The Seventh-Day Baptist Missionary Society (SDBMS) sent their first missionary couple, the Royal Thorngates, to assist Spencer in 1927. However, the SDBMS had to dismiss Spencer because of “irregular conduct,” and he responded by taking many members of the congregation with him to establish an independent church, which greatly weakened the Mission’s work. The Thorngates returned to the USA in 1930 after contracting malaria, and the Mission was unable to find a replacement. Nevertheless, the work of the Mission continued under national leadership, and by 1998 there were six churches with about 300 members.

1914 – Church of God (Anderson, IN). Little is currently known about the early history of this Holiness denomination in Guyana, but the mother church in the USA was founded in 1881 under the leadership of the Rev. Daniel S. Warner.

The Church of God, with U.S. offices in Anderson, Indiana, began in 1881 as a movement emphasizing the unity of God's people and holy living. Daniel S. Warner and several associates sought to forsake denominational hierarchies and formal creeds, trusting solely in the Holy Spirit as their overseer and the Bible as their statement of belief. These individuals saw themselves at the forefront of a movement to restore unity and holiness to the church. Their aim was not to establish another denomination but to promote primary allegiance to Jesus Christ so as to transcend denominational loyalties.

This movement is not historically related to the several Church of God bodies rooted in the holiness revival of Tennessee and the Carolinas in the late nineteenth century. Although it shares their holiness commitment, it does not emphasize the charismatic gift of speaking in tongues generally associated with Pentecostal churches.

The Church of God is congregational in its government. Each local congregation is autonomous. Ministers meet in voluntary state, regional, and national assemblies, and other associations. In North America, the General Assembly, composed primarily of ministers but also including lay congregational delegates, meets in connection with the movement's annual North American Convention held in Anderson, Indiana.

Source: <http://www.chog.org/AboutUs/OurHistory/tabid/67/Default.aspx>

In 1951, the **Rev. and Mrs. Clair W. Shultz** relocated in Georgetown, British Guiana, where, in addition to their regular missions work, they hosted week-long training sessions where pastors and lay leaders from across the country learned how to teach Sunday school, plan and write curriculum, and lead worship services.

By mid-In 2010, the Church of God in Guyana was in the middle of a power struggle between some of the local churches and “an expatriate clergyman” who was accused by the Rev. Samuel E. Paul, pastor of the Bel Air Street Church of God in Albouystown, of attempting to hijack the national organization for his own profit. Pastor Paul expressed the belief that the expatriate clergyman was using local members to usurp the powers of the Guyana-based Executive Council of his denomination.

In the early 1990s, the Church of God in Guyana was experiencing some problems in terms of “vision” as Paul described it. Because of dwindling membership, the Caribbean Atlantic Assembly of the Church of God, which is based in Barbados, stepped in and in 1995 gave a mandate to the expatriate clergyman to provide spiritual guidance in an effort to revive the movement. According to Paul, the expatriate was to work as a Non-Resident Missionary.

However, the clergyman, as Pastor Paul put it, never did anything substantial to improve the general situation of the church body. Instead, he advised that the Executive Council of the denomination sell three of its properties in the city and centralize its operations. The properties in question were the Bel Air Street Church of God, the John Street Church of God and the denomination’s general office on Charlotte Street in Georgetown. Then with the backings of some members of the local Church of God, a steering committee, which according to Paul is unconstitutional, was established and the name of the church was changed to **Covenant Life Centre of Guyana**. Then, the new steering committee of the church put some of its buildings up for sale.

Pastor Paul wrote to the Caribbean Atlantic Assembly informing them of what the expatriate missionary was doing. He also wrote to all the affiliated Churches of God in Guyana and urged them to maintain their unity and resist the temptation to make a profit from the sale of church property. The expatriate missionary was asked to explain his actions and subsequently had his status of Non-Resident Missionary revoked by the Caribbean Atlantic Assembly. However, the expatriate missionary challenged this action because, by then, he had already managed to secure the backing of a large portion of the members of the local congregation.

Eventually a General Assembly was convened to elect a new General Council and all the affiliated churches were invited to participate. But, according to Paul, those churches which had now fallen under the control of the expatriate missionary were ordered not to attend. During the General Assembly, Pastor Paul was elected the Chairman and he immediately instructed the board of trustees to file an injunction preventing the sale of the church’s assets by the expatriate missionary and his group. The injunction was granted but instead of making an additional ruling, the judge indicated that he would trust that the church would mend the differences and move on.

Both Paul and the expatriate missionary were subsequently invited to the headquarters of the Caribbean Atlantic Assembly to resolve the impasse. According to Paul, the expatriate privately

offered to buy him a minibus to induce him to withdraw the matter from the court. "I told the assembly what he had offered me and I informed them that I was not for sale," Paul told Kaieteur News. Paul stated that, despite this, the expatriate missionary proceeded to sell one of the properties, while his faction continued to go under the name *Covenant Life Centre of Guyana*. As of 25 July 2010, the matter was still unresolved.

Bishop C. Milton Grannum is the radio speaker for **Wisdom from the Word**, which is heard daily on WFIL 560 AM and for a number of years was heard in more than sixty countries daily. As Bishop, he oversees several ministries and congregations both in the USA and abroad, including the **Church of God in Guyana, South America**. Bishop Grannum and his wife, Rev. Dr. Hyacinth Bobb Grannum, are the pastors of the New Covenant Church of Philadelphia, which they founded in November 1982. The church, located on the New Covenant Campus, has a membership of more than 2,500 persons and is affiliated with the Church of God in Anderson, Indiana.

The Caribbean Atlantic Assembly of the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) is composed of English-speaking churches in *Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Haiti, Antigua, St. Thomas, St. Vincent, Grenada, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, and St. Kitts & Nevis*. The office of **Caribbean Atlantic Assembly** is presently located in Basseterre, St. Kitts. Dr. Eustace Rollins was elected Regional Coordinator in August 2005. **West Indies Theological College** (WITC), located in Trinidad, is the only Church of God theological institution in the Caribbean. The school provides advanced training for pastors and leaders in the Caribbean–Atlantic region.

1935 - Church of God of Prophecy (headquarters in Cleveland, TN). In August 1998, Bishop Clayton N. Martin assumed the responsibilities of National Overseer of Jamaica (295 churches), the Cayman Islands (one church) and **Guyana (10 churches)**. The independent Bible Churches of God in Jamaica, founded in 1929, joined the U.S.-based Church of God of Prophecy in 1935, and from that beginning other affiliated churches were established in the British West Indies and British Guiana.

After World War II, the following denominations and service agencies arrived: the Church of the Nazarene (1945); Unevangelized Fields Mission (1949), an independent Evangelical sending agency, which now works in the country's interior; the Assemblies of God (1953); Baptist Mid-Missions (1954); Church of God of Prophecy (1956); Bible Missionary Church (1958); Christian Church and Churches of Christ (1959); Southern Baptist International Mission Board (1962); Wycliffe Bible Translators (1973), as well as other groups during the 1980s and 1990s.

1945 - The Church of the Nazarene in Guyana grew from a friendly relationship with an independent holiness group called the Christian Mission. The Rev. Rice, minister of this independent church, had been a minister with this group since 1933 both in New York and Trinidad. In 1945, the churches founded by Rice merged with the Church of the Nazarene, and Rice served as an ordained minister until his death in 1951.

In 1955, the first Nazarene church was established in New Amsterdam. It began in a rented store building, but grew rapidly. In the 1960s, during a difficult time politically and socially for Guyana, the church was put to the test. To that date, churches were started equally between Black and East Indian populations. But the struggle for Independence ushered in a spirit that was unfavorable to all things foreign, which was not a healthy situation for foreign missionaries. The

Rev. Joseph Murugan was appointed as the first local District Superintendent of Guyana during these years, and the church and district flourished under his dynamic leadership. He initiated a 10-year plan to become a regular district, which was attained in 1982. By 2005, Nazarene work in Guyana had expanded into two districts with around 3,000 members.

1949 – Unevangelized Fields Mission (UFM), a nondenominational faith mission (with headquarters in Bala-Cynwyd, PA), began its work in southern Guyana (Region IX) among the Wapishana indigenous people. The Wapishana language began its existence as a written language in the 1950's, at the field headquarters of the UFM. The writing system developed by the UFM missionaries then crossed the border into the Wapishana communities of Brazil by means of missionaries and Amerindians in their travels or in journeys to reach other tribal areas with the Gospel. The "evangelical" script then began to circulate not only through those segments directly tied to the UFM, but also among the few Amerindians who had been converted to the Catholic Faith and who had become literate in the maternal tongue during their trips to visit the evangelicals in Guyana. The UFM also has worked among other tribal groups, such as the Waiwai in the upper Essequibo River basin. The UFM reported 10 missionaries in Guyana in 1998.

1954 – Baptist Mid-Missions, an independent Fundamentalist agency, began work after the arrival of the Walter Spieths, who established a church in Georgetown; however, the mission discontinued its work there between 1970 and 1989; in 2000, the **Association of Baptist Churches of Guyana** reported seven churches with about 500 members.

1956 - New Testament Church of God (Church of God, Cleveland, TN). In the late 1940s, the Rev. Cecil Madray of Norton Street, Georgetown, visited Trinidad and met Evangelist Hasmatalli. He was so impressed by Hasmatalli's ministry that he invited him to Georgetown to speak to his small group of believers comprised of the Madray family, Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Critchlow, the late Harry Binda, Sister Krieger and others. This invitation was promptly accepted and the next year Evangelist Hasmatalli visited. His meetings were successful and this eventually led to the formation of the New Testament Church of God in Guyana.

The Church of God Foreign Mission Board in Tennessee sent the Rev. Dummett to oversee the work and eventually the New Testament Church of God was organized under the leadership of the Rev. Cecil Madray. Other missionaries came from time to time to promote the work but nothing was significantly done until Bishop Like R. Summers became Superintendent of the Caribbean. He visited Guyana, registered the fellowship and appointed Rev. Fred A Brannen to be the Overseer. Properties were bought at Norton Street, La Penitence and Vryheid in Berbice where church buildings were erected.

When the first Annual Convention was held in 1956, there were five organized churches and several missions. After the first decade the number of organized churches doubled and there were many missions scattered throughout Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo counties. After this Overseer Fred Brannen left and Rev. David H. Paul was appointed the new Overseer: the Church grew significantly.

In 1980, the Rev. Jeremiah G. Mohabir took over the helm from Overseer Paul and he expanded the work to Waramuri and Manawarin in the North West District, Kuru Kururu on the Linden Highway, and Orealla up the Courentyne River.

In 1984, Rev. Surujpaul took over the Overseership and the Church continued to make significant strides. After he migrated to the USA in 1992, the Rev. Mahadeo Ramseepal took office and extended the work to Surinam. Also extensive work was now done among the Amerindians of Guyana. He served from 1992 to 2000. During that period, 20 new churches were added nationally, the work in the interior region of Guyana became better established, and many new church buildings and parsonage were erected. The Church grew from a membership of 1,487 to 5,400. New ministers added amounted to 28. During this period the Church was at a point of consolidating and advancing.

In the year 2000, the Rev. John B. Mohabir was elected Overseer and led the 44th Annual Convention, where a record Mission Offering of over \$600,000 was raised. The New Testament Church of God has been a rapidly-growing Church. Most of the existing churches were enlarged and extended to meet the increased attendance, and new ones were built. Since 2000, a total of 10 new churches were added, 14 new ministers were ordained, 20 new missions were established, and the total membership grew from 5,400 to 9,500. The Church of God in Guyana celebrated its 50th Anniversary, its Golden Jubilee, at the National Convention in 2007.

1958 – Assemblies of God. The Rev. John Smith is the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Guyana. Here is a report on its 50th Anniversary Celebration.

As promised I now give you a brief account of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the Assemblies of God in Guyana, held between July 7 and 11 of 2008.

It was a grand 'Family Reunion' which was preempted by several Marches in Guyana from Countrysides, Townships and the City. The procession into the National Park was led by Officials of the AOG.

All roads led to the National Stadium in Georgetown. Floats, colors and Bands gave the occasion a sense of festivity compared to a mini Carifesta. In my estimation there were over seven thousand participants in the National Park Stadium.

The stadium was filled and the various Sections from the Ten Regions, regaled in special colors took up their seat on the stands. There were the Ministers from overseas who were welcomed to the Center Stage. Most of the Old Brigade from among the founders was there.

Such an awe-inspiring occasion brought together tree generations of Ministers and Members of the National Church which boast a membership of over seventeen thousand with a general following of over twenty-seven thousand.

A lively session of singing and dancing (Bible style) prepared the gathering for the address by the indomitable son of Guyana, the honorable Bishop John Ewart Cummings of Restoration Temple in Brooklyn, New York.

The events of the week were inaugurated by a Grand Service opened to the membership and friends of the AOG. Present on the occasion was the Prime Minister Samuel Hinds, a former classmate of the General Superintendent, the Rev. John Oswald Smith, pastor of The Diplomat Center, Central Assembly of God. Then followed the General Council deliberations as the days moved on, and elections of Office Bearers at The Diplomat Center at the corner of Church and East Streets in Georgetown, Guyana.

All glory honor and praise to God for a refreshing morning and nightly stirring messages from such Ministers as Rev. Trask, former worldwide Superintendent of The AoG; Rev. Errol Bhola former Supt. of the AoG in Guyana; Sudnery Ramphal, former General Secretary of the AoG in Guyana and pastor in Kansas City, USA; Rev. David Gunther, former superintendent and former pastor of the Central Assembly Guyana; Rev. Sam Ramphal, former General Treasurer of the AoG Guyana and Pastor of Faith Assembly of God in Brooklyn, New York; Rev. John Smith, General Superintendent and pastor of Central Assembly of God and others.

Source: <http://www.revivaljournal.com/2007/08/02/assemblies-of-god-in-transition/>

U.S. missionary who served Assembly of God church here dies

By Stabroek News editor – Georgetown, Guyana

Sunday, 21 November 2010

Milton J. Kersten, minister, missionary, and educator died at his home in Waupaca, Wisconsin, on November 17, 2010. He was 86.

He was born in Appleton, Wisconsin, on June 9, 1924, the second of five children to Adolph William Kersten and Sarah Leona Tompkins. The family moved to Wausau, Wisconsin in 1927. He established two Assemblies of God Churches, one in Seymour and a second in Oneida while supporting his family as a house painter and decorator. His two sons were born at this time.

In 1962 the family moved to Guyana where they served as missionaries until 1976. In Guyana, he served as pastor of Wortmanville Assembly of God in Georgetown, then as Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Guyana, and as Principal of the Assemblies of God Bible School in Guyana.

Kersten became the Area Director of Assemblies of God missions in the Caribbean in 1976. At the invitation of the Bahamas Council, he and his wife Dorothy moved to Nassau, Bahamas, from where he oversaw missions in Suriname, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the Bahamas.

Assemblies of God celebrating Rev Smith's 40th anniversary

By Stabroek News staff – Georgetown, Guyana

Friday, 1 May 2009

The Assemblies of God Church in Guyana is celebrating Rev John Oswald Smith's 40th year of service with a five-day celebration which started yesterday. According to a press release Smith is the senior pastor of the Central Assembly of God, general superintendent of the national Assemblies of God, speaker on the "Christ is the Answer" broadcast, and presenter of the televised "Family Forum."

1962 – The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (FMBSBC - now, the International Mission Board), began its ministry in 1962 under the Rev. Otis Brady, who previously

served with the FMBSBC in the Bahamas for one term. The following year he organized the Central Baptist Church in Georgetown with 35 members. This church became the center of Baptist work, and new missions were established in the city and in outlying areas. By 1970, the National Baptist Convention reported seven churches and 19 missions with about 700 adherents.

However, the FMBSBC suffered a setback after British Guiana became an independent nation in 1966, and was renamed Guyana. At that time, the SMBSBC had nine missionaries stationed in British Guiana, but in 1970 the government limited the number of visas for foreign missionaries and the FMBSBC was left with only one couple, the Charles Loves. Therefore, national pastors were forced to step up and take charge of the work, and the Baptists continued to prosper.

Historically, the Baptists have worked primarily with the Afro and Indo-Guyanese, and have found it difficult to penetrate the Amerindian groups in the interior. Nevertheless, Baptist work was expanded to the interior by missionary Arnoldo Campbell, a native of Corn Island near the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, who arrived in British Guiana in 1963. Over the years, mission work in Guyana has received the support of Baptist laymen from the USA, who have volunteered their services as short-term workers (medical doctors, nurses, dentists, carpenters, electricians and those with other skills) with the support of their local churches.

The Baptist Cooperative Convention of Guyana, organized in March 1973, has continued to direct and expand Baptist work to the interior of the country and by promoting mission work in Honduras. In 1998, this denomination reported 33 churches with about 2,000 baptized members nationally.

1970 - Christian Churches and Churches of Christ (instrumental - currently, there are at least six congregations) and **independent "churches of Christ."** None of the latter group (*a capella*) were known to exist in Guyana prior to 1970. In November 2002 there were 84 churches identified as meeting on a regular basis in nine regions with a total average attendance of 4,226. In November 2003 there were 91 churches in all 10 regions with a total average attendance of 4,375. In 2010, there were over 98 congregations in Guyana that are part of a nondenominational fellowship of like-minded churches of Christ (*a capella*). The Guyana International Bible School and the Operation Guyana Clinic are operated in Georgetown.

In 1992, Steve and Colleen DeLoach began full-time mission work with **Partner's in Progress** as the host for **Guyana Medical Missions; both are** sponsored by West-Ark Church of Christ in Fort Smith, Arkansas. It has since grown into **Operation Guyana** (headquarters in Georgetown) and includes not only medical missions, but all sorts of other projects: building projects, the **Operation Guyana Bible Institute**, lectureships and workshops, Live the Mission Encampments, hundreds of Vacation Bible Schools, special projects at local hospitals, nurturing projects, etc., are some of the many things that Operation Guyana has sponsored through the years.

1988 – Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions

1993 – Baptist Bible Fellowship

1994 – Baptist International Missions

**ESTIMATED MEMBERSHIP FOR LARGEST
PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS IN GUYANA, 1960-2010
(Sorted by estimated membership in 2010)**

	DENOMINATIONAL NAME (DATE OF ORIGIN)	1960 MEMBERS (1)	1970 MEMBERS (2)	1980 MEMBERS (3)	1990 MEMBERS (4)	2000 MEMBERS (5)	2008-2010 MEMBERS (6)
1	Assemblies of God (1953)	306	2,766	4,500	10,500	14,500	17,250
2	The Anglican Church (1810) (note: statistical data on members may include baptized children)	19,634	25,118	24,000	19,500	17,000	15,200
3	New Testament Church of God (Church of God, Cleveland, TN – 1956)	50	200	700	1,487	5,400	9,500
4	Seventh-Day Adventist Church (1887)	4,422	8,162	12,400	13,300	11,100	9,000
5	Lutheran Church of Guyana (Dutch, 1843)	2,677	5,000	5,420	5,840	6,220	6,600
6	Church of God (Anderson, IN) (1914)	450	1,360	2,800	3,950	5,010	6,210
7	Churches of Christ (instrumental & a capella) (1970)	--	--	500	2,500	4,500	5,116
8	Christian Brethren (Gospel Halls) (1835)	1,000	1,000	2,100	2,800	3,400	4,050
9	Church of the Nazarene (1945)	327	800	2,140	2,580	3,000	3,500
10	All Baptist denominations (1954 ff.)	143	1,086	1,405	1,950	2,800	3,500
11	Guyana Presbyterian Church (Canadian, 1885)	3,200	3,250	2,500	3,360	3,230	3,250
12	Pilgrim Holiness-Wesleyan Church (1908)	3,500	1,810	2,560	2,560	2,575	2,600
13	Presbyterian Church of Guyana (Scottish, 1816)	785	1,800	2,100	2,050	2,150	2,250
14	Wesleyan Methodist Church (MCCA, 1802)	5,365	4,528	5,247	3,000	2,660	2,180
15	The Salvation Army (1887)	1,600	1,000	1,000	1,200	1,400	1,600
16	Unevangelized Fields Mission (1949)	160	500	650	800	1,110	1,220
17	Guyana Congregational Union (LMS, 1808)	3,500	6,000	5,546	2,100	1,610	1,150
18	African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (1911)	1,000	1,586	1,500	1,250	1,020	810
SUBTOTALS							
Other denominations & independent churches							
ESTIMATED TOTALS							

SOURCES:

(1) Taylor, Clyde W. and Wade T. Coggins. *Protestant Missions in Latin America: A Statistical Survey*. Washington, DC: Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, 1961; supplemented by denominational sources.

(2-6) Brierly, Peter. *World Churches Handbook*. London: Christian Research, 1997; supplemented by denominational sources and other studies.

Mainline Protestants associate with each other across denominational lines through the **Guyana Council of Churches**, an affiliate of the **World Council of Churches (WCC)**. Conservative Protestants are associated in the **Guyana Evangelical Fellowship**, which is related to the **World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)**

The **Christian Social Council (CSC)** was founded in 1937, which included the Roman Catholic Church and many Protestant organizations. In 1967, the CSC merged with the **Evangelical Council** (founded in 1960) to form the present **Guyana Council of Churches (GCC)**. Current members of the GCC are: African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Anglican Church (Province of the West Indies), Church of God (Anderson, IN), Church of the Nazarene, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Guyana Congregational Union, Guyana Missionary Baptist Church, Guyana Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church in

the Caribbean and the Americas, Moravian Church, Outreach Ministries International, Presbytery of Guyana, Roman Catholic Church and The Salvation Army.

Through much of Guyana's history, the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches helped maintain the social and political status quo. The Roman Catholic Church and its newspaper, the *Catholic Standard*, were vocal opponents of the ideology of the **People's Progressive Party (PPP)** in the 1950s and became closely associated with the conservative **United Force**. However, in the late 1960s, the Roman Catholic Church changed its stance toward social and political issues, and the *Catholic Standard* became more critical of the government. Subsequently, the government forced a number of foreign Roman Catholic priests to leave the country. By the mid-1970s, the Anglicans and other Protestant denominations had joined in the criticisms of government abuse. The Anglican and Roman Catholic churches also worked together, unsuccessfully, to oppose the government's assumption of control of church schools.

In 1976, the government abolished private education and became responsible for providing free education from nursery school through the university level. The government took over about 600 private schools, the great majority of which had been religious. Most of them had been Christian, and a few had been Hindu or Muslim. The takeover was opposed by the churches and by a large segment of the middle class, which feared a decline in education standards and increased competition from lower-class students. Critics also charged the government with using the public school system to disseminate partisan political propaganda.

Historically, the GCC has been dominated by the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. During the 1970s and 1980s, the GCC became an increasingly vocal critic of the government, and focused international attention on its shortcomings. The GCC protested against the rigged 1985 national elections, which were won by the ruling-PNC candidate, Desmond Hoyte. The conflict between the government and the GCC came to a head in 1985, when members of the PNC-influenced House of Israel physically prevented the GCC from holding its annual meeting. Later that year, police searched the homes of some of the major Christian church leaders. However, the PNC maintained the support of a number of smaller Christian denominations.

Other Religions

According to the 2002 Census, approximately 28 percent of the population is Hindu, seven percent is Muslim (mostly Sunni), and two percent practice other religious beliefs, including Eastern Orthodox, Marginal Christian and non-Christian religions. An estimated four percent of the population does not profess any religion.

1952 - The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. People who sought an indigenous African Church brought the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church to the Western Hemisphere in the 1930s. Congregations of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church were established in Trinidad & Tobago and Guyana in 1952. Since then churches were subsequently founded in Jamaica, Bermuda, England, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Canada, the USA and Eastern and Southern Africa.

In 1950, Davidson Kwati Arthur (Arthur Mar Lukas), allegedly an Ethiopian Coptic Bishop (a Ghanaian residing in Nigeria), traveled from Nigeria to Trinidad and British Guiana. Mar Lukas arrived in Trinidad in October 1950 and was accepted as a bona fide Bishop by all. He ordained Bro. Springer and Bro. Modeste as priest. He also baptized many who were desirous of joining the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He later travelled to British Guyana where he continued to work for establishing the name of the "Ethiopian Coptic Orthodox Church." Some people, however, began to question his credentials as an Ethiopian priest due to his practices.

In 1951, Garnet Springer came across the name of Father Gabre Eyesus Hailu. He wrote to him in Eriteria, while he was there pleading for the reunion of Eriteria to Ethiopia, and received a reply from him when he reached Rome, where he went to translate Geez and Amharic texts into Latin and Italian for the Vatican. Unknown to Springer, Father Hailu was a Roman Catholic priest, but arrangements had already been made for Father Hailu to visit Trinidad. He was well received in Trinidad and was encouraged to visit British Guyana where he witnessed the baptism of many people. His visit and activities helped the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to develop further. He was instrumental in laying the ground work for the visit to Ethiopia by Springer and Mar Lukas in 1952 by recommending the pioneers to Emperor Haile Selassie and His Holiness, Abuna Basilios, The Patriarch of Ethiopia.

His Eminence Abune Yesehaq (born on 27 June 1933 in Adwa, Ethiopia), after graduating from Vladimir Orthodox Theological College in Buffalo, NY, and receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Divinity in 1966, was appointed as Administrator of newly established Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church in USA, the Caribbean Islands and Canada. Abune Yesehaq enrolled at the New York Theological Seminary, while fulfilling his duty as administrator, and earned a Master's Degree in Religious Education in 1968.

After earning his Master's Degree, he was recalled to Ethiopia and was appointed as Secretary to His Holiness Abune Tewoflos, who was at that time was Assistant Patriarch. After two years of service in this capacity, he was reassigned his former duty as Administrator of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the North America, the Caribbean Islands and Jamaica by His Holiness Abune Basilios, the first Ethiopian Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

Abune Yesehaq resumed his expanding Church responsibility and at the same time enrolled in Princeton Theological Seminary and earned a Master's Degree in Systematic Theology in 1973. He continued his study, but was called again to Ethiopia, just a year short of completing his Ph.D. studies. Upon his arrival in Ethiopia, in 1979, the prominent Ethiopian Orthodox Church figure in the West, known as Aba Laike Mandefro, was ordained a bishop by His Holiness Abune Teklehaimanot, and was made Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in the Western Hemisphere, a distinguished leadership he held until the day of his death on 30 December 2005.

Marginal Christian Groups

Marginal Christian groups in Guyana include: the **Jehovah's Witnesses** (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society), which reported 40 congregations with about 2,400 members in 2008; the **Georgetown Ecclesia** is affiliated with the worldwide **Christadelphian** (from the Greek for

“brethren in Christ”) movement; and **Unity School of Christianity** (Association of Unity Churches International) has a branch office in Lacytown, Georgetown.

The Mormon Church. Mormon missionaries held the first sacrament meeting in Guyana in September 1988. Among those who attended was the Majid Abdulla family, which had been baptized previously in Canada. **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints** gained recognition in February 1989, and a small branch (congregation) in Georgetown was organized in March with about 23 people in attendance.

In March 1991, additional missionaries were sent to Guyana and the branch membership soon increased to more than 100 members. Later that year, Guyana became part of the newly-created **Trinidad-Tobago Mission**. By the end of 1993, there were about 270 members. By 1996, membership grew to about 500, and another branch was organized. Today, Guyana is part of the **West Indies Mission** of the Mormon Church.

The Jonestown Massacre in Guyana. The **Peoples Temple** was a quasi-religious organization founded in 1954 by James Warren “Jim” Jones that, by the mid-1970s, had over a dozen affiliated groups in California, including its headquarters in San Francisco. In 1954, Jones began his own church in a rented space in Indianapolis, IN, which he named the Community Unity Church. In 1956, Jones bought his first church building in a racially mixed Indianapolis neighborhood. Although he first named this church "Wings of Deliverance," later that year it was re-named the "Peoples Temple Full Gospel Church," which was the first time he used the phrase "Peoples Temple." Jones' healings and purported clairvoyant revelations attracted spiritualists and curiosity seekers from other established churches.

The Peoples Temple stressed egalitarian ideals and asked members to attend in casual clothes so that poor members would not feel out of place; it also provided shelter for the needy. While the Peoples Temple had increased its African-American membership from 15 percent to nearly 50 percent, in an attempt to further gains the Temple hired African-American preacher Archie Ijames (who had earlier given up on organized religion). Pastor Ijames was one of the first to commit to Jones' socialist collective program. In 1959, the church joined the **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**, and was renamed the **Peoples Temple Christian Church Full Gospel**. This affiliation was a successful attempt to both raise the dwindling membership and restore the reputation of the organization.

In February 1960, the Temple opened a soup kitchen for the poor, and expanded their social services to include rent assistance, job placement services and free canned goods, clothing and coal for winter heating. Ijames and his wife helped to increase the Temple's soup kitchen service to an average of about 2,800 meals per month.

The Peoples Temple's public profile was further elevated when Jones was appointed to the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission. He engaged in public attempts to integrate businesses, and was the subject of much local media coverage.

The Peoples Temple began tightening its organization and asked more of its members than did other churches. It required that members spend Thanksgiving and Christmas with its Temple "family" rather than with their blood relatives, which was the beginning of a process to wean members from families and redirect their lives toward a total commitment to the Temple's social

and political goals. Jones began to offer a deal towards a socialist collective, which he referred to as "religious communalism," in which members would donate their material possessions to the Temple in exchange for the Temple meeting all those members' needs. Pastor Ijames was one of the first to commit to this plan.

By the late 1960s, Jones began openly revealing in Temple sermons his "apostolic Socialism" concept. The concept often loosely mixed tenets of atheism and socialism. During this period, Jones preached to new members that the Holy Spirit was within them, but that Jones' healing power demonstrated that he was a special manifestation of "Christ the Revolution." He also preached that the USA was the Antichrist and capitalism was "the Antichrist system."

Jones preached of an imminent nuclear holocaust, and that the surviving elect would then create a new socialist Eden on earth. In 1965, he predicted this would occur on July 15, 1967. Accordingly, Jones preached that the Temple must move to Redwood Valley, California. Jones led approximately 140 members, half of whom were black, to Redwood Valley in July 1965 and officially opened church in Ukiah, California.

Because of limited success by the Peoples Temple in the Ukiah area, Jones began to move his base of operations to urban areas. In 1970, the Temple began holding services in San Francisco and Los Angeles. It established permanent facilities in those cities in 1971 and 1972, respectively.

By 1972, the Peoples Temple was calling Redwood Valley the "mother church" of Jones' "statewide political movement." From the start, the Los Angeles facility's primary purposes were to recruit members and to serve as a way station for the Temple's weekly bus trips across California. The Temple set up a permanent staff in Los Angeles and arranged bus trips from Redwood Valley to Los Angeles every other week. The substantial attendance and collections in Los Angeles helped to support the Temple's inflated membership claims. The Los Angeles facility was physically larger than the one in San Francisco, and its central location at the corner of Alvarado and Hoover Streets permitted easy geographic access for a large African-American membership from South-Central Los Angeles, Watts and Compton.

Recruiting drives in Los Angeles and San Francisco helped to increase membership in the Peoples Temple from a few hundred to nearly 3,000 by the mid-1970s. Later, when the Temple's headquarters shifted from Redwood Valley to San Francisco, the Temple convinced many Los Angeles members to move north to its new headquarters.

The Temple used ten to fifteen Greyhound-type bus cruisers to transport members up and down California freeways each week for recruitment and fund raising. Jim Jones always rode bus number seven, which contained armed guards and a special section lined with protective metal plates. Jones told members that the Temple would not bother scheduling a trip unless it could net \$100,000–\$200,000, and the Temple's goal for annual net income from bus trips was \$1 million.

Beginning in the 1970s, the bus caravan also traveled across the USA quarterly, including a stop in Washington, DC. In June 1973, House Representative George Brown, Jr. entered a lengthy and laudatory description of the Temple into the *Congressional Record*. The *Washington Post* ran an editorial-page item (18 August 1973), which stated that the 660 Temple visitors were the "hands-down winners of anybody's tourists of the year award" after spending an hour cleaning up the Capitol grounds.

Despite exaggerated claims by the Temple of having more than 20,000 members, one source claims its greatest actual registered membership was around 3,000. However, 5,000 individual membership card photos were located in Temple records after its dissolution. Regardless of its official membership, the Temple also regularly drew 3,000 people to its San Francisco services alone, whether or not they were technically registered members. Of particular interest to politicians was the Temple's ability to produce 2,000 people for work or attendance in San Francisco with only six hours' notice.

By the mid-1970s, in addition to its locations in Redwood Valley, Los Angeles and San Francisco, the Peoples Temple also had established satellite congregations in almost a dozen other California cities, including Ukiah, Bakersfield, Fresno and Sacramento. At the same time, Jones and his church earned a reputation for aiding the poorest citizens, especially racial minorities, drug addicts, and the homeless. The Peoples Temple developed strong connections to the California state welfare system. During the 1970s, the Peoples Temple owned and ran at least nine residential care homes for the elderly, six homes for foster children, and a state-licensed 40-acre ranch for developmentally disabled persons.

The move to San Francisco permitted Jones to return to urban recruitment and made better political sense because it permitted the Temple to show its true political stripes. By spring 1976, Jones openly admitted even to outsiders that he was an atheist. Despite the Temple's fear that the IRS was investigating its religious tax exemption, by 1977 Jones's wife, Marcy, openly admitted to the *New York Times* that Jones had not been lured to religion because of faith, but because it served his goal of social change through Marxism. She stated that, as early as age 18 when he watched his idol Mao Zedong overthrow the Chinese government, Jones realized that the way to achieve social change in the USA was to mobilize people through religion. She admitted that "Jim used religion to try to get some people out of the opiate of religion" and had slammed the Bible on the table yelling, "I've got to destroy this paper idol!"

With the move into San Francisco, the Temple more strenuously emphasized that its members live communally. The Temple aroused police suspicion after Jones praised a radical Bay Area group, called the Symbionese Liberation Army, and its leaders attended San Francisco Temple meetings. Further suspicions were raised after the defection of Joyce Shaw and the death soon after of her husband, Bob Houston. After tension rose between the Temple and the Nation of Islam in San Francisco, the group held a large "spiritual" jubilee in the Los Angeles convention center attended by thousands, including prominent political figures, to heal the rift. It also enjoyed long relationships with Angela Davis and American Indian Movement co-founder Dennis Banks.

While the Temple forged media alliances, the move to San Francisco also opened the group to media scrutiny. After Jones and hundreds of Temple members fled to Guyana following media investigations, Mayor Moscone issued a press release stating the Mayor's office would not investigate the Temple.

In 1972, the *San Francisco Examiner* and *Indianapolis Star* ran the first four parts of a seven-part story on the Peoples Temple by Lester Kinsolving, which was its first public exposé. Kinsolving reported on several aspects of church dealings, its claims of healings and Jones's ritual of throwing bibles down in church, yelling, "This black book has held down you people for 200 years. It has no power." The Temple picketed the *Examiner* and threatened both papers with libel suits. Both papers cancelled the series after the fourth of the seven installments were published.

Shortly thereafter, Jones made grants to newspapers in California with the stated goal of supporting the First Amendment.

In 1974, the Peoples Temple signed a lease to rent land in Guyana. The community created on this property, located in a remote jungle area near the Venezuela border, was called the **Peoples Temple Agricultural Project**, or informally, "Jonestown." It had as few as 50 residents in early 1977. Jones saw Jonestown as both a "socialist paradise" and a "sanctuary" from media scrutiny that had started with the Kinsolving articles.

After Jim Jones relocated in Guyana in 1977, he encouraged Temple members to follow him there. The population grew to over 900 people by late 1978. Those who moved there were promised a tropical paradise, free from the supposed wickedness of the outside world. However, Jones exercised dictatorial power over the community's residents, and dissenters were punished severely by Jones' security guards.

In 1978, Guyana received considerable international media attention when 918 members (almost entirely U.S. citizens, of which about 270 were children) of the Peoples Temple died in a mass murder/suicide on 18 November in Jonestown.

On 17 November 1978, Leo Ryan, a U.S. Congressman from the San Francisco area who was investigating claims of abuse within the Peoples Temple, visited Jonestown. During this visit, a number of Temple members expressed a desire to leave with the Congressman, and, on the afternoon of November 18, these members accompanied Ryan to the local airstrip at Port Kaituma. They were intercepted by Jones' security guards who opened fire on the group, killing Congressman Ryan, three journalists, and one of the sect's defectors.

As a consequence of Ryan's investigation of the Peoples Temple and Jonestown, later that same day Jones ordered his congregation to consume a potassium cyanide-laced beverage. It was later determined by police authorities that Jones himself died from a self-inflicted gunshot; also, his body was found to contain high doses of narcotics.

The Temple's San Francisco headquarters came under siege by national media and relatives of Jonestown victims. The event became one of the most known events in U.S. history as measured by a Gallup poll. The Jonestown story appeared on the cover of several magazines, including *Time* magazine, and newspapers for months. At the end of 1978, the Peoples Temple declared bankruptcy in the USA, and its assets went into receivership. According to various press reports, after the Jonestown tragedy, surviving Temple members in the USA announced their fears of being targeted by a "hit squad" of Jonestown survivors. Several former Temple leaders in the USA committed suicide between 1978 and 1983.

Non-Christian Religions

Hinduism. Following the abolition of slavery in 1833, the British turned to India as a source of cheap labor. **Asian Indians, most of whom were Hindus**, were recruited as indentured servants to work on plantations in British Guiana. They were inclined to leave India because of famine, drought and poverty. They were largely from rural India, predominantly male, with 10 percent children and 30 percent female, which created enormous social problems: Indian men created unions with black women, not marriages. Immigrants between the ages of ten and twenty were counted as adults.

Overall, about 239,000 were transported to British Guiana, and their descendents now constitute 43.5 percent of the population of modern Guyana. Many left Hinduism for Christianity, as the British made it an official policy for Hindus to become Christians before they could be eligible for the better civilian jobs.

In Guyana, explained Swami Aksharananda of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh and Vishwa Hindu Parishad of Guyana, "The British sought to interfere, control and convert the Hindus and Muslims. Many missionaries were brought to Guyana to evangelize the Indian population and to destroy their language and culture. That is why Hindi has persisted in Suriname and not in Guyana." This is the same tactic the British used in India. "During the colonial period," Pundit Reepu Daman Persaud, head of the Dharmic Sabha and Guyana's Minister of Agriculture, told me, "the Hindus were forced to convert to get jobs in the public service, even if they did not want to. Many who converted continued to be Hindus within the private confines of their homes."

Source: <http://www.guyanaundersiege.com/cultural/hindus%20of%20south%20america.htm>

Traditional Hinduism underwent some development as people from different parts of India were thrown together on plantations with Africans and Native Amerindians. Various forms of traditional Hinduism, both Vaishnava and Saivite, continue to be popular. Most of the temples are associated with the *Hindu Orthodox Guyana Sanathan Dharma Maha Sabha*, the largest single religious group in the country. Hindu priests have organized the *Guyana Pandits Society*. Two popular Hindu holy days, Diwali and Holi (Phagwa), are celebrated as national holidays.

There are small groups associated with the *International Society for Krishna Consciousness* (ISKCON), the *Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization of Guyana*, and the *Arya Samaj* organization. There is also a chapter of the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*.

Muslim. Some of the Asian Indian immigrants to Guyana were Muslim, the majority of which were Sunnis of the Hanafite and Shafiite schools. Also, there are small numbers of Ismailis and Shi'as. The Shiites, who have no separate mosque, have experienced some discrimination from the Sunni majority, especially with the growth of a vocal Wahhabi presence. Guyana's pluralistic culture has provided fertile ground for both branches of the Ahmadiyyas, the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement* and the *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Islaat Lahore*, and for the *Baha'i Faith* movement.

There are Muslims in Guyana whose ancestors came from Afghanistan. One of them was mainly responsible for the building of the Queenstown Jama Masjid (mosque) in the capital, Georgetown. They were also involved in the Rose Hall sugar worker strike of 1913.

Chinese Religions. The 150th Anniversary of the arrival in 1853 of the first Chinese to Guyana was celebrated on 12 January 2003. Among the more than 13, 000 Chinese immigrants to arrive in Guyana between 1853 and 1879 were a significant number of Hakkas, although most of the Chinese who migrated to Guyana were Cantonese in origin and came from a small region in southern Kwang-tung (Guangdong) province: a 7,000 square mile cluster of districts within a semi-circle around the triangle of cities on the Pearl River delta (Macao, Canton and Hong Kong). The rest came from Fukien (Fujian) province and from districts just across the Fukien-Kwangtung border, mainly from Amoy and Swatow.

Many Chinese in both periods remained and became Guyanese citizens and worked as shopkeepers, operators of laundries, restaurants and supermarkets, and merchants in the import and export business. Many of their children became civil servants and professionals.

During the exodus of Guyanese after the 1962-1963 social upheavals, many Guyanese Chinese left the country and continued to do so during the 1970s and 1980s. Presently, there are less than 2,000 Chinese in Guyana, many being Chinese nationals who, especially since 1980, came to Guyana to seek permanent residence, open restaurants and send for other family members in China to work when their businesses prospered, while they themselves would often leave for the UK, USA or Canada. In a 1983 market survey for soya sauce, it was found that there were 134 Chinese restaurants in Georgetown, most of them new, and at least one in every village of any reasonable size in Guyana.

Intermarriage, which had always been frowned on by the Chinese, is no longer regarded with much disfavor and occurs now more frequently by both men and women. There are now very few pureblooded Chinese in Guyana except for those who were born in China. By the first quarter of the 20th century, most of the Chinese in Guyana were Local Born and had been so for several generations. Unlike the Home Born Chinese, they had lost all contact with China. The original indentured immigrants did not keep in touch with those back home nor did they encourage relatives and friends to join them in Guyana – probably because of the difficulties of the trip, the hardships on the plantations and the tremendous upheaval and dislocation in south-eastern China around the time of the T'ai ping Rebellion.

Their disastrous uprooting was very traumatic and their ties with their relatives and neighbors were never restored. Instead, many of them adapted to the Guyanese way of life, adopting western dress, speech and manners, and becoming at least nominal Christians. Their descendants, except for their physical appearance, became completely westernized, identifying fully with England as their mother country rather than China. They adopted English first names and even the surnames of the priests or overseers, and did not know how to speak the Chinese language or to use chopsticks. Chinese ladies only wore the Chinese dress (cheongsam) with a high collar and long slits at the sides on special occasions sometimes. By 1925, they lived like any other Guyanese of similar socio-economic positions but nevertheless still retained a certain residuum of institutions, behavior and values that distinguished them from other races and kept them as a somewhat closed group with a tendency to marry among themselves.

The building of **Chinese Association of Guyana** was constructed in 1920 through the generous contributions of the Chinese community at a cost of \$5,000, located at Lot 3 on Brickdam Street in Georgetown. It housed the Billiard Room of the Sports Club and the Indigent Quarters on the first floor and the Association's Hall on the second floor. On the third and fourth floors were dormitories for visitors from rural areas and from abroad. Three stories burnt down during a disastrous fire on 25 July 1982, but only two stories were rebuilt in 1984.

Although the 2002 Census reported the total Chinese-heritage population in Guyana at only 1,395, with 646 being Foreign Born, the Chinese have contributed a great deal to Guyana during the time they have been there. Various Chinese religions are present among the Chinese in Guyana, including Ancestor Worship, Taoism, Buddhism and Christianity.

Afro-Guyanese Syncretistic Religions (animistic). Although most Africans brought to Guyana (who currently constitute approximate one-third of the population) have become Christians, some have also become Hindus and Muslims, while a minority has continued to practice some form of their traditional African-based religious systems that were modified in the New World. These now find expression in Guyanese **Vodou**, an Ashanti-derived religion from West Africa); **Myalism** (a syncretistic religious system) and **Obeah** (witchcraft), which were brought to Guiana by African slaves from other parts of the British West Indies; **Orisha**, a Yoruba-derived religion, also known as **Shango**; **Comfa** (a Bantu-derived religion from the Congo River Basin of Niger-Congo in west equatorial Africa); and, more recently, **Rastafarianism**, which is an imported religion from Jamaica.

Comfa focuses on the ancestral spirits of the various ethnic groups (syncretism) that constitute Guyanese society. Comfa (also called *cumfa* or *cumfo*) includes ecstatic, trance-like dancing and spirit possession, induced by drumming. Similar to Santeria in Cuba or Orisha-Shango in Trinidad, the Comfa religion focuses on ancestral worship, spirit possession, drumming and dance, ritual ceremonies, offerings of appeasement or praise, and complicated witchcraft (obeah) recipes for dealing with the vicissitudes of daily life. The Water Mumma, or goddess of the water, is very important in Comfa beliefs and practices. The full moon and black water are important in the timing and placing of ceremonies. Comfa ceremonies often include fortune telling: the star of the ceremony is the one who will “come through” and after that be recognized and authorized to “read” a person’s future (an oracle or fortune-teller).

In Guyana, a “jumbie” is supposedly a ghost, the spirit of a dead person. It is the rough equivalent of a “duppie” in some other British West Indian countries, such as Jamaica, Barbados and Antigua. According to Black folk legend, the “jumbie” tends to frequent places where it existed before death. Jumbies would not usually be noticed by people, as they are normally invisible. However, they can make themselves visible as human beings, as animals or as anything they want to. While most people are not aware of them, certain people can see “jumbies” at any time. The spirits are generally associated with evil acts or unpleasantness. To control them, one is said to require the services of a **spiritualist or obeah-man (sorcerer)**. An obeah-man can confine a “jumbie” to a particular place or neutralize it, thereby making it harmless. Otherwise, a “jumbie” is free to roam, appearing and disappearing at will. It is not deterred by hindrances or barriers such as walls, fire or water.

The Hallelujah religion is a syncretistic religion among the Carib-speaking peoples of the borderlands of Guyana, Venezuela and Brazil that, from both direct and indirect sources, adopted certain elements of Christianity and fused them with indigenous beliefs and practices (animism) so successfully that they formed a new and flourishing religion among the *Kapon* in the region of the Upper Mazaruni River (Region VII). The word “hallelujah” (aleluia) is used by the *Kapon* Amerindians (*Ingarikó*, *Akawaio* and *Patamona*) to designate a ritual that will only be fully performed with the arrival of the general cataclysm and the white messiah.

The *Kapon* (*Ingarikó*, *Akawaio* and *Patamona*) inhabit an area divided between Brazil, Guyana and Venezuela, surrounding Mount Roraima, the region’s highest mountain, marking the triple border. In Brazil, the *Ingarikó* and the *Patamona* occupy an upland region of the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Territory, located in the northeast of Roraima State.

In Guyana, the *Akawaio* inhabit the middle and upper course of the Mazaruni River and its affluents and the Cuyuni River. The *Patamona*, for their part, are located in the Pacaraima Mountain Range and along the Ireng (Maú) River on the border with Brazil. Both are located in upland areas of Guyana. In Venezuela, the *Akawaio* are situated in the east of Bolívar State on the border with Guyana, close to the Wenamu River.

The 19th century origins of the Hallelujah religion are obscure. However, they point to early Christian mission contacts (Moravians and Anglicans in Guiana and Catholic Capuchins missionaries in Venezuela) and included a *Makushi* indigenous person, Bichy Wung, who is believed to have visited England where, in a dream, God gave him the new Hallelujah religion (so-named from the shouting of “Hallelujah” in worship). After his death, it spread to the *Akawaio* whose own **prophet Abel** (d. 1911?), after visiting heaven and receiving prayer-songs, reformed the religion that had drifted back into traditional shamanist forms.

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Outline of a history of the word “hallelujah”

The word hallelujah was first recorded in the first half of the 19th century in the song of an Indian living on the Corentyne River, on the border between Guiana and Suriname. **This was in 1839.** At the time the **Anglican missionaries** had just arrived in Guiana. On a reconnaissance trip to the area, Bishop Coleridge wrote (Farrar 1892:55-56):

“One time on the Corentyne river I heard an old blind chief sing hallelujah time and again, in a soft and whining cadence, whenever he completed the verse of a sacred hymn taught to him by the Moravians in his youth.” This old blindman, Nathaniel, is depicted as “the last relic,” “the last surviving disciple of the Moravian brothers.”

Based on this first record we can reconstruct the process of catechism during the Dutch colonization in Guiana, though not without first stressing that the Dutch indigenist policy did not look to convert the Indians or settle them in mission villages, but to establish trade relations with them. **This catechism was undertaken by the German Moravians.** They established three missions focused primarily on the Arawak (Lokono) and Carib (Karinya): **the Pilgerhut mission** on the Essequibo River between 1740 and 1763; **the Ephraim mission** on the Corentyne River, shut down soon after its inauguration in 1757; and **the Hoop mission** on the Suriname side of the Corentyne between 1765 and 1806, transferred to the Guianese side between 1812 and 1816.

The Moravian missionaries devoted themselves to intense study of the Arawak language (Lokono) and ended up translating numerous hymns and Bible passages into the native language, as well as producing an Arawak (Lokono)-German dictionary. What interests us, though, is the relationship with the *Akawaio*. The documentation available at the present time consists of diaries from the first mission, Pilgerhut, only. The first contact between the *Akawaio* and the Moravians took place in 1743 on the Berbice River, an encounter repeated various times on the same river between 1748 and 1749. It is also known that the *Akawaio* were among the Arawak who arrived at the Pilgerhut mission in 1751, where they were baptized. In addition the Moravians already had at that time an *Akawaio* preacher called Ruchama (Butt Colson 1994-1996).

For the subsequent period that leads us to **the most important mission, Hoop (Hope)**, located on the Corentyne River, the information is even sparser. While the history of the Moravians in Guiana is starting

to be studied in more depth, we are missing almost a century of history between mid-18th century and 1839. Although we do not know whether the chief who sang Hallelujah in 1839 was Carib (Karinya) or not, we do know that the Kapon followed prophets from other peoples too and spread from east to beyond the western border of Guiana. In the 18th century there are reports of **outbreaks of prophetism** involving the Akawaio. Here we can already spot the emergence of the themes of the Indians transforming into whites and the return of the dead back to life. The earliest outbreak, observed in 1756, would lead in turn to an examination of the catechism undertaken by the **Capuchins in Venezuela**, the possible epicentre of the outbreak.

The second recording of the word takes us to the end of the 19th century. In 1884, the colonial agent Everard Im Thurn witnessed “an absolutely incessant cry of Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” that lasted from one sunset to the next, accompanied by large amounts of drinking. This occurred in the foothills of Mount Roraima, on the Guianese side, in the village of a people linguistically and culturally close to the Kapon, the Arekuna (Pemon).

Between the first and second recording of the word hallelujah there are reports of five outbreaks of prophetism in the area around Mount Roraima and on the Essequibo and Demerara rivers, as well as accounts of two migrations of the Kapon, and on a smaller scale the Makuxi, Arekuna and Maiongong, to the coastal **Anglican missions** among the Arawak (Lokono) in the northwest of Guiana. This period is well-documented in Guiana. Here we can glimpse a **prophetism movement** common to the Kapon and Pemon based on the following **main elements:** terrestrial cataclysm by water and fire, skin changing, change of language, the end of work, the figure of the messiah and that of the white (or other) prophet, death at the hands of the followers of the prophet as a means to transformation, and, finally, the demand for books or papers. The latter demand is one of the more obscure points. The prophets had distributed papers in 1840 and 1845.

The migrations of the Kapon to the coastal missions, which heavily surprised the missionaries, were strongly linked to this demand for paper. In this context we can highlight a young Kapon man who stayed for around ten years from 1853 onwards at the Pomeroun mission where catechization was made in Arawak (Lokono) before moving to a Carib (Karinya) village with the idea of producing a translation into the Kapon language of the Carib (Karinya) version of the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, made years earlier by the **Anglican missionary W. Brett.**

W. Brett and the young Philip ended up working together on the Kapon translation on the coast of British Guiana for about a year. This resulted in the distribution of small books printed in the Kapon language and illustrated with Biblical passages to various villages. On one hand, this provoked the second flow of the Kapon and neighbouring peoples to the coastal missions between 1863 and 1869 and, in the case of the missionaries, a shift in their attentions to the central region of Guiana. **This led to the expansion of catechism as far as the headwaters of the Demerara and Essequibo rivers where two [Anglican] missions were founded, Eneyuda and Muritaro. These were followed by another three on the Mazaruni, Cuyuni and Essequibo rivers.** Though the missionaries had already declared themselves surprised by the openness of the Kapon to catechism, the Patamona of the Potaro River would consolidate the hypothesis of spontaneous conversion completely. Arriving in this difficult to access area in 1876, the [Anglican] missionaries discovered that the Patamona were already chanting, in the Kapon language, the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed and the Ten Commandments.

Adapted from: <http://pib.socioambiental.org/en/povo/ingariko/1864>

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At the beginning of the 20th century the word “hallelujah” already carried a considerable weight among certain indigenous peoples. It was the designation given by the Kapon and Pemon to a ritual common to both peoples. For observers of the first decades of the 20th century, however, this was an “atypical dance,” a “strange dance,” a “strange religion” or a “crazy religion.”

On the three sides of the triple border, the intensity of the dancing in Hallelujah drew the attention of several observers. On the Brazilian side, “many of the dancers fall into a trance, like in spiritist sessions, candomblé and macumba,” wrote Nunes Pereira in 1946. During the same period, on the Guianese side, “they sang and danced with such frenzy that men and women became hysterical and began to shout and roll about on the ground,” reported F. Kenswil.

Nonetheless, in June 1977, the Guyana Council of Churches officially incorporated Hallelujah as a member, and on 21 October the Government of the Republic of Guyana approved the incorporation of the association. The Anglican Church was responsible for this initiative.

The Jordanites or White Robed Army is a religious group founded in Guyana. It traces its beginnings to Joseph McLaren, an Anglican from Grenada, who beginning in 1895 preached “pure Protestantism” from the Bible in Guyana. This led to the establishment of the **West Evangelist Millennial Pilgrim Church in British Guiana**, but the principal founder was Nathaniel Jordan (d. 1928), who was “called” to join the movement in 1917 through visions. Their beliefs combine Hindu (reincarnation), Jewish, Christian, African and occult elements.

In November 1973, a group of Faithists and Jordanites came together and formed the **Guyana United Apostolic Council**, which allegedly represented all White-Robed gatherings throughout the country. This organization experienced a schism in February 1989 that led to the creation the **Guyana United Apostolic Mystical Council** representing the Faithists. The word “faithist” refers to magical/religious beliefs and practices, such as devotees of Myalism-Obeah, Comfa, the Hallelujah religion, the Jordanites, the Shouter/Spiritual Baptists and other related groups in Guyana and elsewhere in the Caribbean region.

Grenadian Joseph McLaren (or MacLaren) was an overseer on a plantation in south Trinidad in the 1880s, when he created a new church by combining elements of Hinduism and Christianity. McLaren took his church to British Guiana when he moved there early in the 20th century. In Guyana, his syncretistic religion became known as the **Jordanite Church**, named after McLaren's ablest disciple, Nathaniel Jordan. The Jordanites teach self-help, personal pride, communal life, hard work, and Bible study.

However, according to Archbishop Raymond Oba Douglas of the **Mount Prigsah Spiritual Baptist Archdiocese International**:

In Guyana, the [Spiritual Baptists or Shouters] are called “Jordanites” because immersion started at the Jordan; in St Vincent it's the Shakers; in Jamaica the Revivalists. But, explains Archbishop Douglas, apart from a few differences they have all the same general traits: “entertainment” of the Holy Spirit, “shaking” and talking in tongues. It is the Christianity of Africans in the New World. Source: <http://www.raceandhistory.com/historicalviews/africanspirit.htm>

For many years, members of the Jordanites in their lily-white robes and their leader with a long staff or crook were a familiar sight in Guyana. They were members of a church established by Elder Nathaniel Jordan at Agricola Village on the East Bank of the Demerara River. Elder

Jordan taught a "new" doctrine ("free from popish traditions and based on principles laid down in the Holy Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testaments") as received from Joseph Mc Laran of Grenada. Elder Jordan established his church in 1917 and built the first temple at Agricola in 1924. He was succeeded by Elder J. N. Klien, Bishop. The proper name of the church was the **West Evangelist Millenium Pilgrim Church**.

Both men and women dressed in white robes: the women in white veils, the men in white turbans. Many of their meetings were held near busy street intersections. Baptism took place on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. They wore no shoes in the sanctuary, leaving them near the door. Many ate no meat at all, while others limited the kinds and quantities of meat they ate. They also forbid the use of alcoholic beverages.

QKingdom Ministries, Inc., was founded in 1994 by Rt. Rev. Sylveta Hamilton-Gonzales. It is an offspring of the **Jordanite movement** that migrated from Guyana to North America in the late 1960s. Today, the organization and its four subsidiaries have been active within the Crown Heights community in Brooklyn, NY, for more than ten years. Through various programs, QKingdom serves more than 500 members throughout the community and surrounding areas, as well as internationally.

QKingdom Ministries is an *Interfaith, Multi-cultural, Multi-ethnic, Not-for-profit*, community-based organization that works to build a community of nations working for the benefit of humanity. Its mission is to create an environment that encourages spiritual and academic development that promotes Economic Empowerment and Socio-Cultural Awareness as a positive influence in the community by serving as role-models who motivate, educate and accept the challenge to provide economic empowerment/stability, develop entrepreneurship, and transitional housing for the homeless, and other issues surrounding healthcare in the community, including persons combating HIV/AIDS.

The Mystical Temple of the Rose and Flame (nondenominational) was established in 1994 in Brooklyn, NY, as a subsidiary of the Mission of QKingdom Ministries, Inc. It is an independent religious organization led by the Rt. Rev. Sylveta Hamilton Gonzales.

Amerindians religions (animistic). In many animistic worldviews found in hunter-gatherer cultures, such as the Amerindians of Guyana who dwell in remote areas of the interior, the human being is often regarded as on a roughly equal footing with other animals, plants, and natural forces. Therefore, it is morally imperative to treat these agents with respect. In this worldview, humans are considered a part of nature, rather than superior to, or separate from it. In such societies, ritual is considered essential for survival, as it wins the favor of the spirits of one's source of food, shelter and fertility, and wards off malevolent spirits.

Animism (from Latin *anima* "soul, life") is a philosophical, religious or spiritual idea that souls or spirits exist not only in humans but also in animals, plants, rocks, natural phenomena such as thunder, geographic features such as mountains or rivers, or other entities of the natural environment.

Shamanism is an anthropological term referencing a range of beliefs and practices regarding communication with the spiritual world in indigenous societies. In Guyana, the *piaiman* is the Amerindian healer (medicine-man, *curandero*) or shaman and is highly respected by his people.

He specializes in herbal medicines and is believed to have supernatural powers to control evil spirits. He also functions as a village counsellor (offering advice and counsel, mediation of conflicts, etc.), a composer of words used in ritual blowing (known as *tareng*), and a disciplinarian during initiation rites or puberty rites for the young man. He trains other *piaimen* and is believed to use his shamanic powers to cast spells (black magic), to invoke the dead when relatives or the dead wish to speak to them (medium), to practice telepathy, to communicate with animals, and to have unusual foresight. The shaman's main task is to alleviate traumas affecting the soul/spirit in order to restore the physical body of the individual to balance and wholeness.

During the pioneer stage of Christian missionary activity (and, in some cases, today as well) among the Amerindians of Guyana, especially in the remote interior, it is reported that the *piaiman* threatened fellow-villagers against speaking and associating with the missionaries (both Protestants and Catholics), lest great harm would come to them from the spirit world (malignant spirits or demons). Of course, the *piaiman* was protecting his turf from outside influences, which might undermine his authority in the indigenous community, as well as his livelihood. It took many years of patience while learning the indigenous languages, customs and culture before some of the missionaries were able to befriend and communicate with the villagers.

As anticipated by the *piaiman*, the ancient beliefs and practices of many of the indigenous peoples of Guyana were forever changed by these contacts with the foreign missionaries, who learned their languages, taught the villagers to read and write, educated them in their own languages, preached and taught them the Gospel message, established mission stations and churches among them, and introduced them to modern civilization, both Guyanese society as well as worldwide. However, today, indigenous languages are still spoken by an estimated nine percent of the Guyanese population.

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