



Issue 2 volume 3

CBF NOTES

BWA CONGRESS- FEATURED EDITION

CBF Notes...

Caribbean Baptists' way of staying in touch. We will always need your help in the following ways:

- Distribute *CBF Notes* as widely as possible.
- Forward the *CBF Notes* to your email contacts.
- Post a hard copy of the *CBF Notes* on your church's bulletin board.
- Send us contributions about what is happening at your National body and individual churches.
- Join our mailing list by sending your email address to us.
- Pray for us

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FROM THE CBF PRESIDENT'S DESK

FROM THE CBF PRESIDENT



Rev. Dr. William Thompson

My Family,

It is always a joy to greet you through this medium. I refer to you as family because that is how I feel about my Baptist sisters and brothers across the Caribbean region as well those in the diaspora. Apart from the fact that we have all been incorporated into the same Body by the Holy Spirit, we do share a common history of domination and colonialism that binds us together.

It is this sense of family that encourages solidarity in times of distress and disaster. Our region had visitations from two fierce storms - tropical storm Erika and Hurricane Joaquin - that resulted in varying degrees of devastation in Dominica and the Bahamas. While we celebrate the fact that there was no fatality in the Bahamas, we are saddened by the loss of lives in Dominica as well as the sailors who seemed to have died when their ship sank in the midst of Joaquin.

I was pleased with the efforts of our EST who kept us informed during these sad moments and made appeals for prayers and material support. Though the response could have been much better from our Conventions/Unions/Associations/, we are still grateful for what we have received not only from our Caribbean sisters and brothers but also from our overseas partners like Baptist World Aid and American Baptist Churches International Ministries. Because of your generous gifts, CBF was able to stand in solidarity particularly with our sisters and brothers in Dominica in tangible ways.

The visits made by Vice President Bernadette Richards from St. Vincent and the Grenadines and EST Jackson to Dominica on behalf of CBF must be noted. This for me represents what family stands for – sharing in each other's suffering and pain. I encourage you to keep the spirit of family alive so that whatever is your experience – joy or sorrow – you can be assured of support.

William Thompson (Rev. Dr.)
President

FROM THE CBF EST DESK



Rev. Everton Jackson

FROM THE CBF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY/TREASURER

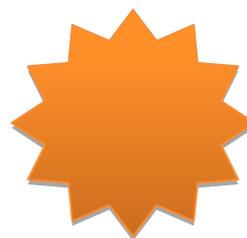
Baptist ecclesiology allows for a variety of worship styles, church management and operations as well as in some areas of doctrines. Unlike some church communions, the unity that exists among Baptists despite our diversities is not akin to uniformity. Critical to Baptists' beliefs are the autonomy of the local church and liberty of conscience.

Autonomy, however, is not about total independence or disregard for cooperation and partnership. It is more about the ability of each congregation to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is important to have a proper understanding of autonomy if the spirit of insularity and parochialism is ever going to be exorcised from some Baptist congregations or Conventions/Unions/Associations.

The principle of liberty of conscience is enforced in some areas that could be deemed nonessentials. Baptists have the liberty to be guided by their own convictions relative to dress code and hairdo among other areas of externals. Baptist congregations are good examples of unity amidst diversity. This calls for Christian maturity exemplified in love and mutual respect.

The Caribbean Baptist Fellowship exists to bring together Baptists of varying convictions and worship styles to celebrate their unity in diversity and to partner in areas of mission and evangelism, relief and development, Christian education and stewardship and theological education.

Everton Jackson (Rev.)
Executive Secretary/Treasurer



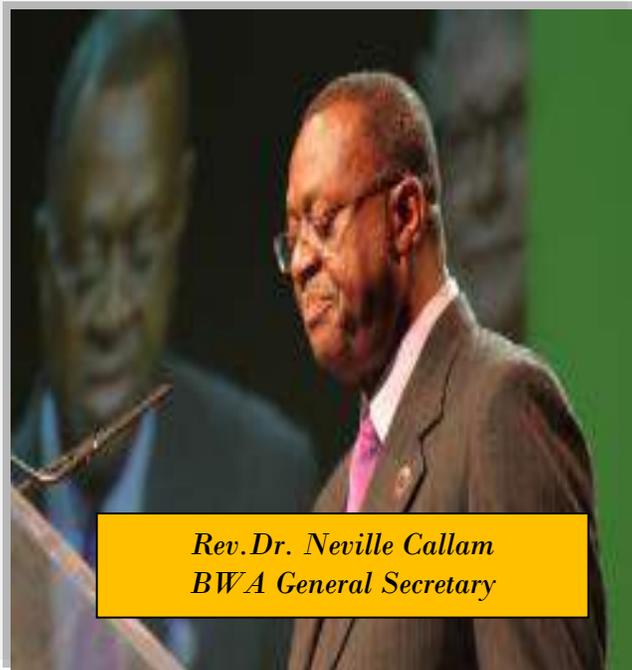
BWA CONGRESS OVERVIEW

BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE 21ST CONGRESS BY SANTANA MORRIS

The Baptist World Alliance 21st Congress was held at the International Convention Centre in Durban, South Africa from July 22 to 26, 2015. The congress, which had as its theme: “Jesus Christ, the Door” attracted 2,500 Baptist Christians from more than 80 countries. Approximately 80 Baptists from the Caribbean and Diaspora were in attendance.

Outgoing President John Upton, declared the congress open at the opening celebration held on Wednesday July 22 at 7:00 pm. The opening event featured the telling of the South Africans’ liberation story against the backdrop of African rhythmic singing, chanting and drumming, instrumental music provided by the South Korean children’s choir and orchestra and congregational praise through singing and praying.

It is often said that Baptists are people of the word. This was clearly demonstrated in the quality of the sermons preached during the congress by Baptist preachers from various countries and cultures. Among the preachers was the Rev. Dr. Anthony Carroll from Nassau, Bahamas, a former president of the Bahamas National Baptist Missionary and Education Convention. Carroll, who made an impassioned call for pastors to avoid the pitfalls of leadership, claimed that pastoral leadership is



*Rev. Dr. Neville Callam
BWA General Secretary*

distinctive. As such he presented Jesus as the “model for leadership” for the pastor.

One of the features of Congress over the years has been the presentation of the Human Rights Award. At Congress 2015, the fifth Human Rights Award was presented to Rwandan Corneille Gato Munyamasoko, general secretary of the Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda (AEBR). He was recognized for his work in peace and reconciliation after the 1994 genocide in his country.



In his response, Munyamasoko paid tribute to all those who helped and worked with him, including friends, colleagues and acquaintances in the DRC and Canada, as well as to his wife, Anne Marie and their seven children. The Congress Human Rights Award is presented at each Baptist World Congress, normally held every five years. The first Congress Human Rights Award was made in 1995 to former President of the United States Jimmy Carter.

The highlight of the congress was the installation of Ngwedla Paul Msiza as the second African to be president of the

Baptist World Alliance, the global organization for Baptist Churches on July 25. Msiza succeeded John Upton of the United States, and is the first African to hold the office since William Tolbert of Liberia served as president of the BWA from 1965-1970. Msiza served as BWA vice president from 2010-2015 and has been actively involved in the BWA since 2000, serving on its governing bodies and several key committees and commissions. He was president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, one of six regional fellowships of the BWA, from 2006-2011 and general secretary of the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) from 2001-2010. The presence of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship was felt at the congress through the involvement and participation of Caribbean Baptist Christians, such as Rev. Everton Jackson, Rev. Karl Henlin, Dr. Lisa Nugent, Rev. Norva Rodney and Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley among others. The 21st Congress of the Baptist World Alliance is now history and all eyes are set on Brazil, the venue for the 22nd Congress in 2020. See you there!



CBF Booth at
BWA Congress

Caribbean Delegates at BWA Congress 2015



Durban, South Africa

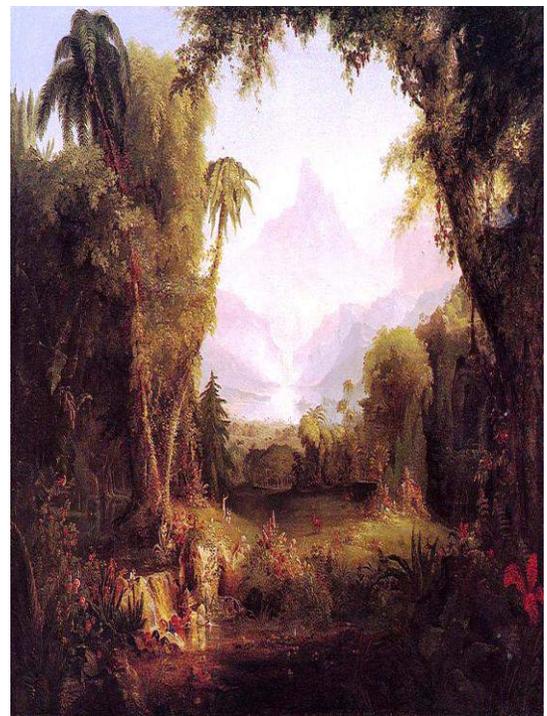
Presentation Made by Rev. Norva Rodney at Baptist World Alliance Congress 2015

Topic: *The Political Implications of Environmental Conflicts - The Christian Response*

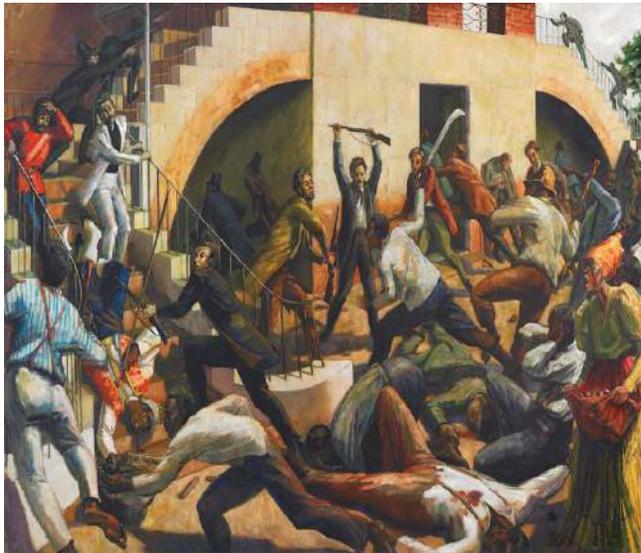
In treating with the subject “**The political implications of Environmental conflicts**”, I will first set my expressions in context before examining the current global realities. Having established same, I will invite your mind into considering what may constitute our Christ-centered response. This will then segue into an ethical Afri-centric perspective and my concluding remarks.

THE CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

An understanding of European geo-political and economic expansion in the West, is incomplete without it speaking to a spirituality which manifested itself, in the inhumane extraction and enslavement of Africans, the subsequent environmental conflicts and the related atrocities meted out to the indigenous peoples of the land. Such assessment ultimately bears witness to the historic and present moral dilemma we experience, born out of competition for scarce material resources.



SLAVERS REVENGING THEIR LOSSES.



In 1865, the then descendants of this motherland marched for social justice in Jamaica, in what has been dubiously dubbed the Morant Bay rebellion. The result of the social conflicts, rooted in a cry to the colonial powers for a just distribution of the earth's resources, included the decimation of hundreds of Afro-Jamaican lives. One hundred and fifty years later, we in Jamaica, like many others in the African diaspora are still struggling to make the case for ecological justice for all.

Two decades after the fact, there is compelling evidence to suggest that a number of environmental factors, especially increasing population density, soil erosion and regular drought coupled with unsustainable agricultural practices, played a key role in the Rwanda conflict. This is not to say that such environmental problems by themselves caused the genocide. According to Stephen Brosha (2012), Rwanda's decades-long build-up of land and resource scarcity must be analysed pursuant to establishing truth.

For him, the shift from traditional agricultural practices to less sustainable alternatives had helped to trigger the violence in 1994. Such unsustainable practices had created increased tensions in communities throughout Rwanda and eroded the capacity of Rwandan society and government to respond to crises, thereby giving the Rwandan genocide an unmistakable environmental component. Indeed, it is becoming clear that the Rwandan genocide cannot be properly understood without critically considering the role of the environment.



THE CURRENT REALITY

Experts on the issues of environmental conflicts argue that a conflict emerges when stakeholders have irreconcilable differences of incompatible interests, values and goals. If unresolved, or not effectively managed, such conflicts are likely to escalate and intensify. According to Bob and Bronkhurst (2010) competition for finite environmental resources, divergent attitudes and beliefs as well as institutional factors have the potential to trigger and exacerbate conflicts. For them the issue of scarcity, perceived or real is a crucial component of understanding environmental conflicts.

SOURCES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS

As the term suggests, biodiversity related conflicts have to do with the nature of plants, animals and human lives on earth. They also touch on conflicts over the conservation of protected areas and species, green technologies as well as protecting rights, in relation to indigenous knowledge and natural resources. Environmentalists agree that almost all cultures have in some way been recognizing the importance of nature and its biological diversity and its contribution to cultural formation and the need to maintain it. However, power, greed and politics have affected the precarious balance.

Coastal Zones conflicts tend to result from a combination of issues. Bob and Bronkhorst cite Ahmed (2010) who points out that these have to do with high developmental demands, high population density, environmental degradation and poor management to balance conservation and development. Michael Taylor (2012) speaks to the impact of climate change on the rising sea levels and of the bleaching of coral reefs in the Caribbean. The combined

impact of these factors include the erosion of beaches, loss of low lying islands due to flooding and loss of aquatic life. Such reefs also exist to protect shorelines from storm surges and so, if destroyed, people are made even more vulnerable to flooding. To the extent that corals are also major tourist attractions, their removal can have severe impact of the revenue of certain countries.

Many countries in the European Union are beginning to understand their vulnerabilities to climate change and the need to develop practical adaptation measures. Issues range from the effects of climate change on economies to potential public health threats, such as increased mortality associated with heat-related illness or natural disasters. Responding to these

challenges requires aligning climate change measures with policies in other areas, particularly economic development and energy security.

Land acquisition and development remain a significant factor in determining the quality of life lived by peoples of the earth. Land scarcity and ambiguous property rights have contributed globally to grievance and conflicts. This is particularly so when alternate means of survival are absent and is worsened when communities are armed. Kok et al note that when land contains valuable minerals, complaints can arise between local communities and those who seek control over land for resource extraction. Bauxite mining in Jamaica has witnessed to wide-scale and controversial displacement of families and in some cases the undermining of socioeconomic stability in rural communities.

Population growth and movements, insecure property rights and legislation, environmental degradation and a myriad of other factors all appear to be variables that need to be tracked in analyzing land-based or land related conflicts. Desertification in the name of development and the terrors of drought bring communities with competing livelihood into further conflicts. Not only on this African continent, but also among the displaced descendants of Africans now domiciled in the Caribbean and the Americas, a complex interplay of land related issues have been resulting in environmental conflicts. Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff (1997), in critiquing the reality from the South American context has established from research, that political maneuvering and the systemic poverty among certain peoples of the earth, have consistently limited our access to the land and its resources, resulting in conflicts.

TOWARD A CHRIST-CENTRED RESPONSE

The current global environmental crisis is a matter of both theological and ethical significance. From the foregoing, it is conclusive that world peace and human survival are under siege, born out of our blatant disregard for the created order. Thankfully, even if belatedly, people from every corner of the earth are wising up to the fact that we cannot continue abusing the material goodness of the earth without inflicting heavy social cost upon our own selves. As Christians, we must now unapologetically offer enlightened leadership and prophetic guidance to state officials in demonstrating wholesome commitment to restoring and preserving the environment. This emerging ecological conscientious must be encouraged as we pursue peace rooted in a mutually coherent worldview.

As people of the Judeo-Christian faith, we understand that the Creator God gave human beings the privileged task of taking care of the creation, not to exploit, dominate nor destroy it. (Gen 2:15.) As such, we are servants of the earth and by extension we have a moral obligation to act both out of respect for the integrity of the creation as well as for the preservation of all that God gives in creation. In Lev. 25: 4-5, we are given instructions which are meant to ensure our cooperation in the preservation of God's created order. Elizabeth Thomas-Hope (1996) is of the conviction that we are in a moral dilemma!

For her, our exploits in science and technology, while having bought undeniable benefits to human beings, have also presented us with some harmful, long term effects. Central to the theological challenge that the conflicts present, is an apparent disregard for life, evident in the myriad pattern of environmental pollution identifiable. Economic and production interests tend to supersede the dignity of workers and privatistic profiteering is taking

privatistic profiteering is taking priority over the common good. It is patently unjust for the privileged few to continue accumulating excess and squander earth's resources while the masses are living in abject misery. The dramatic threat of environmental conflict is reminding us that greed, corruption, selfishness and injustice at both individual and corporate levels are contrary to the aims of creation, as an order which was and still is characterized by wholeness and mutual interdependence.

In Lev. 25:4-5, we were given instructions which are meant to ensure our cooperation in the preservation of God's created order

Having said that though, environmental conflicts and proper ecological balance remain a fleeting illusion until leaders in private and public sectors address in a frontal way the structural forms of poverty in the world. Against the background of recent occurrences, we have been forced to reckon with the fact that severe environmental problems have been at the root of Haiti's social, economic and political crises. Reversing this protracted trend of environmental destruction is fundamental to Haiti's development, socioeconomic stability and ultimately security.

Environmental degradation resulting from the exploits of external economic interests, compounded by political fragility, extreme poverty, urban over-crowding and social inequities, can only result in violent conflicts and loss of lives. Concerted national and international support is needed in Haiti, to stop deforestation and land erosion, address rural

and urban pollution and strengthen an inadequate capacity to cope with climate change related disasters.

Garnet Roper (2012) is at pains to point out that the countering of environmental degradation and poverty must be driven by an equal concern for the enfranchisement of the poor. Rooting his argument in the Jubilee concept, testified to in the book of Leviticus, he asserts that the world is only post agrarian in an illusory way. Like Boff, Roper is of the conviction that the future of humankind and the future of the environment lie in the return to economies based on production and enfranchisement of the worker. Roper states that “*the state of the guarantor of social justice is the key value in the fight against poverty.*” As such, the entitlement and enfranchisement of the poor is key in the fight against environmental degradation and systemic poverty.

It is sad that some industrialized countries and multinational entrepreneurs destroy the natural environment at the expense of ecological balance in order to produce more for export. Regrettably, during the process, the plight of the poor is impoverished, committing them to lives of persistent poverty. In seeking to regain the balance at the heart of the ecological crises, a total *metanoia* (*repentance, transformation of mind and heart*) is required. The church needs to find a way of overcoming political obstacles, masquerading in garments of exaggerated nationalism and economic interests. These are only serving to impede the essential mission toward sustainable redemption action.

A COMPLEMENTARY AFRO-CENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

In conflicts such as these, the influence of traditional African ethics in conflict resolution plays an important role. Diligent study and informed embracing of certain Afro-centric principles regarding creation can help in establishing more wholesome attitudes toward freedom, dignity, rights and development.

The role of traditional African ethics, before the colonial period, was to consider moral conduct in terms of attitude toward life. It encompassed issues of human dignity and respect, within the understanding that an individual’s humanity, interconnects with the dignity and humanity of others.

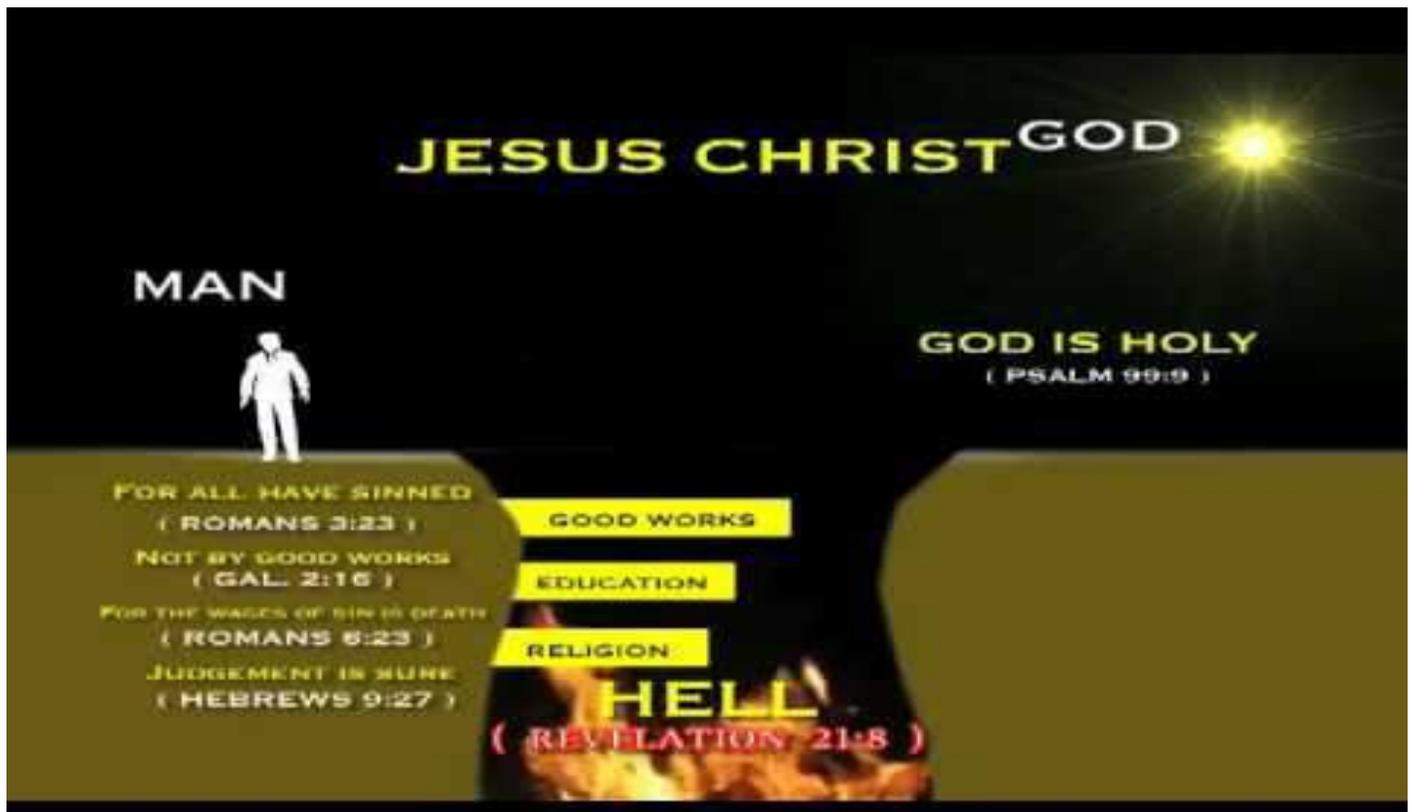
According to the arguments above, environmental conflicts should be resolved in ways that protect and promote creation, and encompasses issues of human dignity. The basis of this concern for human life is the African belief in the dignity of every human being. One word expresses this notion of dignity: *Ubuntu*. The concept of Ubuntu is the key to an understanding of traditional African ethics. It means weight, solidity, and consistency, as in the Hebrew notion of the *Kabod of Yahweh*. In African ethics, a person fulfills his / her humanity (humanness) when he / she is capable of respecting the humanity of others.

It is, therefore, against this background that this presentation climaxes with a call for us to commit to the tenets informing traditional African ethics which can be applied toward peacefully ending and resolving conflicts in God's world. Today, we are standing on the threshold of a new day, an opportunity to rebuild social trust, dignity, justice, unity, freedom, and real development through reconciliation, in the light of Ubuntu as a world vision.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

Such is the vision with which Leonardo Boff might have been possessed as he spoke of "the emergence of the new paradigm, planetary community," in his book "Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor." Consistent with such vision, let us be determined to put up creative resistance to those who are bent on reducing the Earth to an assortment of natural resources or to a physical and chemical reservoir of raw materials.

This creation, this gift of our benevolent and gracious God, has its own identity and autonomy as an extremely dynamic and complex organism. Let us recommit to experiencing the Earth again as firsthand, feeling the clean wind on our skin, plunging with childlike innocence into fresh mountain waters, even as we capture and celebrate the real essence of biodiversity. Let us return to our God, to the God of all creation and let us invite God's Spirit of life to once again fill us with respect, with reverence and with a real regard for the dignity of God's created order.



“ I am the Door” by Rev. Dr. Jules Casseus (Haiti)

A Devotional Thought shared at the CBF
Regional Meeting at the Congress



What did Jesus mean when He said, *“I am the door”*

(John 10:9)? It is my pleasure to share a devotional thought on the Congress theme: *“Jesus Christ, the Door”* The Gospel of John is the only one among the four gospels to record the 7 ‘I AM’ sayings of Jesus, reenacting the personal identity of God. Yahweh, *“I am who I am”* was the name that was revealed to Moses while he was about to respond to God's call to go down to Egypt and free the Israelites and lead them to the Promise Land.

The 7 ‘I AM’ sayings of Jesus are:

1. **John 6:35**, *“I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger.”*
2. **John 8:12**, *“I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.”*
3. **John 10:9** *“I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”*
4. **John 10: 11** *“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for His sheep.”*
5. **John 11:25** *“I am the Resurrection and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me”*
6. **John 14:6** *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”*
7. **John 15:1** *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser.”*

“The statement, *“I am the door,”* found in John 10:9, is the third of the seven “I AM” declarations of Jesus. According to Charles Swindoll, *“Jesus: The greatest Life of All,”* these “I am” proclamations point to His unique, divine identity and purpose. It is, to my understanding, that the “I am” sayings reflect the *“I am who I am”*, which is the personal name of God, revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. In this “I am” statement, Jesus colourfully points out for us, the exclusive nature of salvation by saying that He is *“the door,”* not *“a door.”* Furthermore, Jesus is not only our Shepherd who leads us into the “sheepfold,” but,



He is the only door by which we may enter and be saved (John 10:9). Jesus is the only means we have of receiving eternal life (John 3:16). There is no other way.

To get a clear picture of Jesus' meaning in this statement, it is helpful to understand a little of that ancient culture, especially of sheep and shepherding. Of all domesticated animals, sheep are the most helpless. They will spend their entire day grazing and wandering from place to place.

As a result, they often become lost as sheep have no "homing instinct" as other animals do. They are totally incapable of finding their way to their sheepfold even when it is in plain sight. By nature, sheep are followers. If the lead sheep steps off a cliff, the others will follow.

Additionally, sheep are easily susceptible to injuries and are utterly helpless against predators. If a wolf enters the pen, they will not defend themselves or even run away or spread out. Instead, they huddle together and are easily slaughtered. If sheep fall into moving water, they will drown.

However, sheep do fear moving water and will not drink from any stream or lake unless the water is perfectly still. This is why David in the 23rd Psalm tells us of the shepherd who "makes [us] to lie down in green pastures, who leads [us] beside the still waters . . . -- though [we] walk through the valley . . . [we] will fear no evil. For [the Shepherd] is with [us]."

Sheep are totally dependent upon the shepherd who tends them with care and compassion. Shepherds were the providers, guides, protectors and constant companions of sheep. So close was the bond between shepherd and sheep that to this day Middle Eastern shepherds can divide flocks that have mingled at a well or during the night

simply by calling their sheep, who know and follow their shepherd's voice. Shepherds who are inseparable from their flocks would lead the sheep to safe places to graze and make them lie down for several hours in a shady place. Then, at nightfall, the shepherd would lead the sheep to the protection of a sheepfold.

There were two kinds of sheepfolds or pens. One kind was, a public sheepfold found in the cities and villages, large enough to hold several flocks of sheep. This sheep pen would be in the care of a doorkeeper, whose duty was to guard the door to the sheep pen during the night and to admit shepherds in the morning who would call their sheep. The sheep would respond to its respective shepherds as each would know its own shepherd's voice.

The second kind of sheep pen was in the countryside, where the shepherds would keep their flocks in good weather. This type of sheep pen was nothing more than a rough circle of rocks piled into a wall with a small open space to enter. The shepherd would drive the sheep at nightfall, though it. Since there was no gate to close—just an opening—the shepherd would keep the sheep in and wild animals out, by lying across the opening. He would sleep there, in this case, literally becoming the door to the sheep.

In this context, Jesus is telling us that He is not only the shepherd of the sheep, but also the door of the sheep. In doing so, He is vividly contrasting Himself with that of the religious leaders of His time whom He describes as "thieves and robbers" (John 10:8). When Jesus says, "*I am the door*," He is reiterating the fact that only through Him is salvation possible.



One who believes the gospel ([Hebrews 11:6](#)) and repents of sin ([Luke 13:3](#)) is assured of being in “the fold” having entered by “*the door*.” As Christians, Jesus is both our Shepherd and the Door to the sheepfold who provides for all our needs. Knowing that the world is full of predators whose sole intent is to destroy us ([1 Peter 5:8](#)), we are always under His protection. More importantly, we are fully confident that “*when the Chief Shepherd appears, [we] will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away*” ([1 Peter 5:4](#)).

“*I am the door*”, said Jesus, “if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture...,” This verse connotes three things: First, it was about a paper that I was invited to present at the CBF assembly in British Guyana, this passed November 2014. I was asked by Rev Everton Jackson, to talk on the subject titled “Crimes and violence in the Caribbean and the response of the Church.” I was amazed to discover how much the Caribbean nations and societies are exposed to prevalent crimes and violence carried out by our own people. Making life unbearable for many, and especially for the masses, the powerless majority in our third world nations.

Secondly, it is something to do with my own country Haiti; over 211 years ago, my Haitian forefathers fought the French slave owners and gave birth to the First Black Republic of the World, the second independent Republic in the New World; only after 2 years, the father of the new Nation, Jean Jacques Dessalines, was assassinated by one of his generals, and ever since the country is experiencing a constant struggle for power, after all these years and until now the country is unstable politically, economically, socially and spiritually.

Thirdly, You may be aware that Haiti shares the beautiful Island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic. The Island was discovered and named by Christopher Columbus in December 1492. But, I would like to mention the fact that My Haitian nation is having a major racial conflict with its neighbor, the Dominican Republic. In 1937, three years after the US occupation of Haiti, the Dominican authorities massacred for no good reason, 35 thousand Haitians on their territory. In spite of that bad experience, Haitian workers continue, over the years, to cross the border, looking for a better way of living; up to now we do have nearly 1,000,000 Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. Recently, the Dominican authorities have issued a decree that they will be doing mass deportation of Haitians and this will include even those Haitians who were born and grew up over there.

Those three examples:

- a) Major crimes, violence and poverty that characterize our Caribbean nations and make life miserable for the majority of the peoples, the masses;
- b) Constant unrest in Haitian society--the First Black Republic of the World, a country that had the possibility to become a great model for persecuted people around the world;
- c) Deep hatred and racial conflict between the Haitian people and the People of the Dominican Republic.

These are, among many other sinful actions and attitudes that I do not have time to mention here, vivid signs that show the urgent need for our peoples to come to Christ. We the Church, do have major work to do in our regional zone in order to invite our peoples to come to Christ, the door of salvation.

As Christ ambassadors, we do have the responsibility to lead the peoples of our societies to choose the only way, follow the only Shepherd, get into the only door to salvation, Jesus Christ. It will be only then that we will be able to observe real conversion, deep changes and transformations in our societies, the Caribbean nations and the World.

Special Presentation Made by Rev. Anselm Warrick (Trinidad & Tobago) to CBF Regional Meeting at BWA Congress

Topic: Caribbean Baptist United For Service

Text: Psalm 133

Introduction:

I have decided to approach this topic by making a declaration that Caribbean Baptists are united and as such are poised and ready for service rather than to appeal for unity. I beg to differ from those who assert that Caribbean people could never unite. In this presentation I will justify my position.

WE ARE ONE PEOPLE

The Caribbean people have so much in common. In the first place, we are the people who came; having being uprooted from somewhere and brought here. As such, we share a common history.

Secondly, we share a common space. The Caribbean is unique for its weather, its warmth and friendliness. We are envied by many around the world. We are similar in our experience from slavery to emancipation and colonialism to independence.

I have been to a number of the islands and was surprised by our similarities. We seem to have the same problems: violence among our teens and youths; problems in our educational systems and with politicians -some of whom fatten their pockets at the expense of the poor and vulnerable.





I also believe that as Baptists, we are one people. This oneness, however, is not based on our name or our history or our geography or even our liturgy, but on our common experience of being recipients of God's amazing grace. Biblical unity is not about being in one location, nor about having the same worship styles. It is not even about having the same creed, or being of the same race. Christian theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer says: "Christian unity consists in what Christ has done for us. He is the basis of our communion."

Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones says, "*Christian Unity is the result of a shared faith in Christ*". Paul, writing in Ephesians 4:3-6, sets forth the basis or elements that make up the foundation for

Christian unity; one Lord, one Faith, one Body, not always visible, baptized by one Spirit, one God and Father of us all. We all have that common experience of having been captured by the love of God expressed in the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. "This is our story, this is our song." "Some through the waters, some through the flood, some through the fire but all through the blood."

Paul further states that we are to maintain the unity of the Spirit. So Baptist Unity is not something to be coerced or contrived, but maintained and expressed outwardly, as the reality of an inward spiritual condition. Christian unity is a gift endowed to the body by the Holy Spirit. So Baptist unity may not always be apparent, but it is real; it is there. Be encouraged by that.

WE ARE DIFFERENT

Having made the point regarding our oneness, am I asking you to disregard our obvious differences? Does True unity disregard diversity? I state emphatically NO. Real unity is not unaware of, and does not run away from diversity.

As discouraging and disconcerting as our differences may be, we are called to acknowledge them. What are some of our differences as a region and as Baptist people? These differences are reflected in aspects of our history, geography, liturgy, personalities, spiritual experiences as well as spiritual gifts. Paul in 1Cor 12:4 says there are diversities of gifts, differences of operations, and administrations. We should both acknowledge and celebrate our differences providing we are not motivated by selfish pride or destructive intentions. Real unity is not about uniformity; it is a deep and meaningful appreciation of our God-given unique location, history, experiences, talents and gifts.



It is no secret that differences at times pose grave challenges to Baptist unity not only in the Caribbean. While we ought not to ignore these challenges, we cannot allow them to destroy our essential unity as God's people. We should allow our essential unity in the Spirit to be manifested and expressed even in the midst of our differences.

I believe that the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship is the God-given vehicle for the expression of service to God in the Caribbean. I salute the esteemed President, hardworking Executive Secretary/Treasurer and efficient Administrative Assistant, Women, Men, Youth, and all who prayerfully support the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. The Fellowship is a perfect example of unity in diversity as we come from different cultures, backgrounds and liturgical styles and yet we are united in mission and service.

WE ARE READY.

Real Christian Baptist Unity is pleasant to behold. David, after having brought the 12 warring tribes together for the first time into the single nation of Israel, looked at them and exclaimed in utter joy: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). David commends and recommends unity as it is of God. It leads to productivity as it brings all hands on deck in the service of God. Be ready to serve when

called; be ready to give your all, to join with brothers and sisters to fulfill His will through the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship.

We are one Caribbean people, despite our differences. Therefore, as Caribbean Baptists, we should allow the Holy Spirit to guide and teach us; to cause understanding, appreciation and celebration. When we do, we will see the fruits of goodness, godliness, growth and blessings.





**Baptist World Alliance Congress
Durban, South Africa
Bible Study Presented by Rev. Karl Henlin
(Jamaica) at BWA Congress.**

Theme: “*Jesus Christ the Door to Liberty*”

Introduction

We have gathered here at this Congress under the general theme “*Jesus Christ the door.*” This Bible Study will be guided by the subtheme “*Jesus Christ the Door to Liberty*”.

The theme of Liberty has been central to the message of the Gospel of Christ. It is a message which essentially says that something special happened in life, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God had acted decisively in Jesus through his death and resurrection to reveal and effect His purpose of redemption for the whole world and thus setting things right again

I suspect that depending on one’s social location and theological orientation, this word *liberty* may well hold differing meanings and even evoke various responses. But there are fundamental freedoms given to every single human person made in the image of God. We can define this liberty as: ***freedom to flourish and to live in harmony with others and the natural environment.*** Therefore, anything or anyone who restricts or prevents this liberty is oppressive and enslaving.

Therefore, Liberty stands in opposition to oppression, enslavement or for having few choices. It speaks to the possibilities for living in harmony, living in peace, enjoying the possibilities for human potential and living in harmony with nature. It is a freedom to choose our future and not having our future enforced upon us. Anyone or any people or country for whom these options are absent or taken away, the image of God is demeaned and marred, the program of good for God’s good creation is frustrated and that reality stands in need of freedom.

Our theme today is ‘*Jesus Christ the Door to Liberty*’. This theme reflects the essence of our faith, conviction and invites us to make the following affirmation:

We affirm that in the life of Jesus, God offers liberty, a way to freedom, a possibility, and a prescription applicable to every culture, every generation, in every time and in every place.

As we do so, we are mindful that we live in a pluralist society, in which it is not only that there are a variety of cultures, religions and lifestyles, but that all these are celebrated as of equal value, to be approved, cherished and celebrated and that our societies are to be free of dogma or any exclusive claim to truth.

In such a world, any exclusive claim we make about Jesus has and will come under rigorous examination, critique and rejection. What makes this affirmation and the gospel offensive today is when we dare to suggest that the truth revealed in the gospel ought to govern public life. This pluralist world responds “let that remain in the realm of private and personal choice” but for us it’s the way we have found and it’s the way which sends us on our way towards a fuller, freer life. *(Read more on the Bible Study attached)*



BWA PARTICIPANTS



BWA CONGRESS PICTORIAL OVERVIEW 2015



CCP WRITERS' CONFERENCE 2015

CARIBBEAN CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS WRITERS' CONFERENCE 2015

Caribbean Christian Publications (CCP), the leading producer of Sunday School and Vacation Bible School literature for the region and the Caribbean Diaspora in North America, is in thanksgiving mode to God, over the success of *Writers' Conference 2015*. CCP is also expressing gratitude to its writers and prayer partners around the world who played their part in contributing to the success of the eight-day event, which was held in Mandeville.

The residential Conference, which ran from Saturday, August 8 to Saturday, August 15 at the Mount Calvary Retreat Centre in Mandeville, had over twenty-four participants including writers, editors and contributing editors from across the Caribbean, Central America and North America. They came together to write and review Sunday School teacher and learner lesson guides for adults and youth for the 2016-2017 period. The conferees hailed from the Bahamas, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Panama and United States of America.

One of the highlights of the Conference was that for the first time in the 40-year history of CCP, the Sunday School literature was prepared in two languages, English and Spanish. Spanish translators from Panama ensured that the *CCP foreign language pilot project* got off the ground, in the outreach of the literature to Spanish-



speaking communities in the region and the Caribbean Diaspora. Currently, CCP publishes and supplies, literature in English, to English, Spanish and French speaking countries, but the literature is translated at the point of usage, by the teachers of the material. Under the pilot project, Spanish-speaking Sunday School students and teachers will soon have the literature in their own language. The CCP foreign language pilot project is to be initiated in the coming year.

In addition to the team of in-residence writers at *Writers' Conference 2015*, there are home-based writers across the region. The home-based writers are from Antigua/Barbuda, Belize, Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia and the USA. The overarching theme for the new Sunday School literature is "*Living The Word*" and represents the fourth phase of curriculum development for the adult and youth teacher and learner lesson guides.



Last year a similar Writers' Conference was hosted by CCP to prepare literature for the 2015-2016 period for youth and adults. The Sunday School publications for youth cater to persons in the 13 to 18 age group, while those for adults cater to all who are 19 years of age and older. Meanwhile, CCP's children's groups which produce publications for persons 12 years of age and younger, began their new phase (phase 4) in September 2011.

The resource persons/co-ordinators of *Writers' Conference 2015* were Beryl Roper, Director, CCP; Erica James-King, Assistant Director/Editor of Adult Publications, CCP; Derri-Ann Palmer, Editor of Youth Publications, CCP; and Consulting Editors Gillian Francis, Linnett Edgar and Rebecca McHenry. Mrs Roper points out that every year for the next five years,

a Writers' Conference will be hosted by the organization, to produce new Sunday School literature for youth and adults. She is extending heartiest appreciation to the sponsors and supporters of the CCP Lapathon, which was held in March (proceeds from the Lapathon helped to finance the Writers' Conference); as well as churches and church associations, which assisted with preparations for the Writers' Conference. The CCP Director is also expressing thanks to all persons who gave their support through the development of the new curriculum for the new phase of the Sunday School literature.

CCP, which is the literature agency of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, is a non-profit organization that provides biblically grounded, educationally sound and culturally relevant Sunday School literature for the region and sections of the Caribbean Diaspora. The material is used by over 33 denominations in more than 27 countries. For more information on CCP, visit <http://www.ccpcbf.org> or www.facebook.com/ccpcbf.



Writers and editors for the CCP Adult Sunday School publications: (right-left: back row) Derek Archer, Erica James-King, Rebecca McHenry, Rev. Kenneth Dubissette, (right-left: front row) Cheryl Strachan, David Fraser and Joan Mars.

Panamanians Xiomara Whitaker-Lewis and Rogelio Brathwaite perform during culture night at CCP Writers' Conference 2015.



Writers and editors for the CCP Youth Sunday School publications: (right-left: back row) Peta Gay Kirby, Linnett Edgar, Lilieth Ledford, Derri-Ann Palmer, Andrea Dawes, Joyce Pinder, Xiomara Whitaker-Lewis, (right-left: front row), Judith Johnstone, Violet Stephenson Smythe, Rogelio Brathwaite and Gillian Francis.

Members of the writing team for adults engage in animated discussions: (right-left) David Fraser, Erica James-King, Cheryl Strachan, Derek Archer, Joan Mars and Rev. Kenneth Dubissette.



Some Jamaican conferees (Derri-Ann Palmer, Lilieth Ledford, Joan Mars, Peta Gay Kirby and Judith Johnstone) do a rendition of Jamaican folk songs during CCP Writers' Conference 2015 Culture Night. The MC for culture night, Rogelio Brathwaite (in background), looks on.



Bahamians Cheryl Strachan and Joyce Pinder (who are at the podia) host a question and answer segment on the Bahamian culture, during Culture Night at CCP Writers' Conference 2015.

CBWU-26 YEARS OF EXISTENCE



Sis. Yvonne Pitter

This year marks the 36th anniversary of the Caribbean Baptist Women's Union (CBWU). As the women's union celebrates 36 years of existence, let us give thanks to the Almighty for keeping the Baptist women of the Caribbean together over these many years. Let us also give God thanks for the pioneers of CBWU who held the flag high, so we as leaders today, can carry on the good work of the Baptist Women's Ministry. What a joy it is to be a part of this Regional family. Let us not take it for granted, but trust God to help us to grow this ministry from strength to strength.

Let me use this medium to congratulate all our sisters who have experienced some special events in their personal lives or their families. Some of you have children who got married, passed examinations, are going on to further studies, or celebrating a special wedding anniversary. Congratulations!

There are those who have had many challenges such as illness, death in the family, emotional, financial or other physical issues. I say to you, "to God be the glory" for He is greater than our problems or challenges and every child of God has a special place in His plan. Remembering God's goodness puts a song in our hearts.

Over the past five years as members of the BWA Women's Department we have been focusing on the theme "In step with the Spirit", with various sub-themes added. As of this year after the Leadership Conference in Johannesburg, we will be using a new theme "Arise, Shine!" Taken from Isaiah 60:1.

GRENADA BAPTIST WOMEN IN ACTION



The Grenada circuit of Baptist women is a combination of seven churches, scattered throughout the length and breadth of that 120 square mile nation. With the resilience that Spice Island people are known for, they faced many challenges, but have been able to undertake meaningful programmes for the women and families of their churches.

PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

On March 17th, they hosted a Health Talk at the Grand Anse Baptist Church. The aim of the event was to encourage families to make healthy lifestyle choices and to promote wellness in their communities. The featured speaker was Dr. Lambert, who shared her expertise on how promoting a healthy home environment is the basis of a healthy nation. The session was well attended and elicited a wide range of questions and debate. The circuit plans to host other such events to meet the expressed needs of their members.

FAMILY FROLIC

The night of May 31st was truly a night that the member churches shall remember for a long time. The organizers chose a tranquil, secluded beach as the setting for a night of fun, food, frolic, fellowship, worship, and “hanging out”.

The idea was to get as many ladies (and men) out in a social environment, just to be able to have an evening out.

The event officially came to an end at about 2:00 a.m., for most ladies, but for others, the event lasted for almost 24 hours!

The organizers were encouraged to see the ladies and youth mingle with each other, and even the men who were present could hardly contain themselves with the fun and excitement generated. The Christian life truly does not have to be dull and drab!



EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN

*INSPIRING & ENCOURAGING Women
to Live a VICTORIOUS LIFE in Christ*

"So if the Son sets you FREE, you will be FREE INDEED. ~ John 8:36 NIV



Caribbean Delegates at BWA Congress 2015



Durban, South Africa