

**“Healing and Transformation  
Given in Christ  
Fulfilled through the Spirit”**

**CCC 7th General Assembly, Panama, June 11, 2005**

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My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, this is for me a very precious moment in my still unfolding life-story. It is a moment that fills me with a great feeling of joy, a singular sense of pride, and unmatched spirit of privilege.

I will be forever grateful to the CCC authorities and organizers of the Seventh Assembly for affording me this opportunity, and for conferring on me this special honour. You may well be wondering why all this “joy-talk”, and “pride-talk”, and privilege stuff”.

It’s all because of what God, the Great, Eternal, and Loving Giver has done for me, and perhaps through me, as a result of the mission and work of the CCC.

My “joy-talk” is really “God-talk” – for the God, who is the Giver of Life, is also the Giver of Healing and Transformation; and I know that we have all come here to bear witness to that truth in our own personal lives and social circumstances. God continues to heal us of diseases and maladies of which we ourselves are sometimes not even aware.

God continues to slowly, mysteriously, and strategically transform us into modes of living and believing that we still do not fully appreciate or even understand. In some strange and sacramental way, each one of us, as agents of God’s healing and transforming mission, is a wounded healer and a transforming factor; for there is always much more to us than meets the eye, or fires the imagination.

So I am just glad to be here; nay, to be still here – since so many of those who started all of this are no longer with us. Like Simon Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, I can truly say, “It is good for us to be here!”

My “pride-talk” is really the “CCC-Story-talk”. Having served as the Chief Co-ordinator of the Inaugural Assembly in Kingston in 1973, and also as the Director of the Planning Unit for the Second Assembly in Georgetown, Guyana in 1977, travelling all over the world to secure partnerships and coalitions for the survival of the CCC, my pride in being present at this the Seventh Assembly, some thirty-one years after Kingston, is both deep and strong.

The CCC is now a full-fledged adult organization, with all the trials and challenges of structural arthritis, and ecclesial anaemia, and strategic amnesia. The CCC is alive and well, struggling for some analgesic healing as any adult would, and bringing into shared

focus a new vision of regional transformation and human development. We are to be justly proud that it has survived, and equally determined that it should continue to thrive.

My “privilege-stuff” is about my own good luck. I was lucky to get in on the ground floor of the action; to help shape much of the early programmes and policies, to interpret our initiatives to many and various bodies, including the Vatican. I was lucky to discover the signature theme *The Right Hand of God* one night as I was between sleep and wake in my mother-in-law’s house.

I was lucky to develop the art of high-tech begging on behalf of the Caribbean poor, in support of the CCC and its programmes. Then I was fortunate to write up a dissertation on the progress of the CCC for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Sussex University in 1979.

So it has been for me a great privilege to have become a CCC graduate in every sense of the word, and to return to this public space to say an unqualified “thank you” to the CCC for the invaluable privilege of, and unique opportunity for, my vocational nurture and professional advancement.

There is therefore no doubt in my mind, that our presence and participation in this historic assembly must be taken to mean something very significant we must be understood to be here, all thirty-three member –churches through their representatives, because we are unreservedly committed to the mandate of the CCC in *Promoting Ecumenism and Social Change in Obedience to Jesus Christ and in Solidarity with the Poor*.

We must be understood to be here because we are passionately committed to the shaping and the pursuit of a vision of a new Caribbean – integrated, independent, and indivisible, because of, and not in spite of, the rich diversity, the indomitable creativity, and the infectious spirituality of our beautiful people.

We must be understood to be here, because we are at one and the same time the inheritors and the ancestors of an unfinished religious agenda and tradition that still struggles to be producer, protector, protestor, and provider all at once, and we are trying to find a way to do it all whether separately, or collectively.

We hare here to rediscover who we are in terms of belonging – we belong to the Church, but does the Church belong to us? Questions of definition and control still baffle and confuse us in the church; but it may well be that Spirit of God, present in this assembly, will empower our minds and warm our hearts to take some substantial leaps forward in allowing God’s healing ways and transforming will to bind us closer together, and drive us out from collective navel-gazing to corporate hell-razing.

In the Cathedral yesterday morning during the Opening Service, while we were worshipping God in Spanish and English, the words of Jesus were hanging over the altar

in Latin. The words were ET PORTAE INFERI NO PRAEVALEEBUNT. My Anglican translation was: “And the Gates of Hell Shall not Prevail”.

We are here to take note of the new realities that are being visited upon our region and its peoples, the re-configurations of our systems of thought and expectations, the realignments of our connections and life-styles, the re-allocations of our resources and reserves, and the re-contextualizations of our global challenges and opportunities. The General Secretary, Gerard Granado, has made it clear that we are about the business of “re-founding”, and not just about the business of re-structuring.

How we go about such a task without changing roots into branches and branches into roots will be left to wisdom of the decision-makers and the horticultural skills of the churches. Whatever paradigm we use in the re-founding however, whether building, or planting, or birthing, we must always be guided by the virtues of the therapeutic and transformative properties of time. The past may belong to us, but the future belongs to the God who is always on the way towards us, with healing and salvation in the divine wings and ways.

Our Assembly Theme: “Healing and Transformation – Given In Christ and Fulfilled Through the Spirit”, is clearly a composite theological description of our Trinitarian faith, our Christian hope, and our affirmation of Redemptive love. In my view, the theme has three purposes.

First, it seeks to describe the life-giving action of God the Holy Trinity, as the Re-creator and Sustainer of all that live, and move, and have their being. Second, it seeks to assert the saving nearness of God especially in the face of all that would diminish, all that would demonize, and all that would destroy, third, it seeks to propel us into new vistas of contextual Anthropology, Christology and Pneumatology, for the practical working out of our ecumenical mission.

And yet, as simple as it sounds, and as straightforward as it appears, our theme still poses some profound conceptual and theological difficulties. So that while it is comforting to our ears, it is also complex to our experience. Although it is positive in its appeal, it is also paradoxical in its application. While it is theologically liberating, in terms of its allegiance to the Gospel proclamation, it is also politically loaded in the practical implications of its cultural range and spiritual reach.

By that I mean, for purposes of our immediate discussion in this gathering, while we are clear that the sole agent of our theme is God the eternal Giver, who exactly is being healed and transformed? Is it the Church, or the CCC, or the Ecumenical Movement, or the Caribbean community, or the Global family, or simply aspects or attitudes of our human condition? In times like these, as we try to explore the meaning of God’s saving and sustaining work for us, on us, and with us, I usually find myself asking the simple five-part question: From what? To what? By what? For what? And with whom?

It is in the struggle to find satisfying answers to these simple questions that we encounter some of the complexities and contradictions to which I have just alluded. How serious are these complexities? Do they really make a difference to our way of thinking, and believing, and acting? Or are they just expressions of our appetites for making theological mountains out of spiritual molehills? Where are we now, in terms of our social, moral, spiritual, and religious terrain? Let me share with you my limited reading of the regional scenario, from a theologically critical perspective. I am using the term “critical” here in the sense of the Greek notion of *krisis* – making an analysis based on a subjective judgement of our times and circumstances in the region.

When we held our Inaugural Assembly in 1973, and we chose the theme of “The Right Hand of God”, we not only commissioned a CCC hymn, that has now become the Caribbean hymn both at home and throughout the Diaspora, we also put together a composite psalm, and Phillip Potter delivered his Address on the theme. Last week Tuesday I had the privilege of attending the consecration of the new Anglican Bishop of congregation of over a thousand persons.

The Right Hand of God is doing all sorts of things: writing, pointing, striking, lifting, healing, planting in our land. It was all very nostalgic and euphoric. But yet, beyond the walls of that church, and beyond the shores of all the islands of the Caribbean it struck me forcibly that a different song was being sung by the peoples of the lands. That different song at first sounded like blasphemy, but on reflection, when I checked into the Gospel of Matthew, it really was no blasphemy at all.

In Matthew Chapter 25 there are three very powerful passages in which Jesus waxes eloquent about the dangers of indifference and irresponsibility in the Kingdom of Heaven. The parable of the ten bridesmaids is followed by the parable of the talents, and then comes his judgement on the nations of the earth. In his prediction about the end times, the Son of Man is seated on the throne with his angels, and the division of fortunes begins.

Those who have done well, in terms of the Kingdom, are called sheep, and are placed on his right hand. Those who have done otherwise are called goats, and are shunted to his left hand. The judgement of the goats is very harsh indeed. The text reads as follows: “Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” In other words, “Get to hell out of here!” So the sheep are on the right hand of God, and doing well, and the goats are on the left catching hell.

So as I sang that CCC hymn in Kingston, the Spirit was actually transposing for me the realities of life on the outside of the church away from the words being sung on the inside. For while we were singing “The right had of God is writing, lifting, and so forth, the winds of the world outside were breaking in with another version that said: “The left hand of God is messing up our lands; the left hand of God is messing up our churches, messing up our youth, messing up our minds, messing up our hopes messing up our rights, messing up our cultures, messing up, messing up, messing up.”

The left hand of God is not the activity of God, rather it is the activity in the face of God. We are busy feeding our goats and our goat-like appetites and values. We are not feeding the Lord's sheep, nor are we tending the Lord's lambs. The left hand of God is really and experience of alienation and decay – some of it blissful and sweet to the mouth, but all harmful and useless to the belly. The left hand of God is the instant picture of our world today. Let us examine this a little closer.

We live in a world that is *hurting*; and the efforts to ease the pains are more facile and superficial that they are radical and restorative. We live in a world that is *hungry* – not just for food, but also for faith that will help us to work through the grave infelicities of life's unpredictable deals.

There is now a global call to end hunger in the world. We may have the capacity, but we do not have the compassion. No more was that hunger for faith more evident than in the expressions of global anxieties, or more especially in the teeming masses of people who flocked to the Vatican around the last hours of the late Pope John Paul II, and to his subsequent funeral. The sight of the masses told me more about the spiritual hungers of our times than about the popularity of the dying Pope.

We live in a *harried* world – harried and harassed by the global obsession with terrorism, held under siege by the possibilities of nefarious conspiracies and threats of destruction, driven by the excessive notions of security, and virtually imprisoned by the ever increasing architectures of violence.

We live in a *hollow* world – in which there is more noise by more people in more places, all trying to fill the voids of despair and doubt, the empty spaces of boredom and cynicism, the cavernous wells of fruitless words and sweet-sounding nothings. Yes, we live in a *helpless* world – where even the most powerful of the powerful are unable to discern the right ways of wholesome existence, or the simple demands of the common good, or even the noblest requirements of the human spirit.

Hurting, Harried, Hungry, Hollow, Helpless – all are we, in some way or other, with varying degrees of intensity, but all with certain experiences and expressions of need. For the left hand of God is not where we ought to be; and our innermost souls cry out for deliverance and not for delivery, for liberation and not for more libation, for divine healing and not for more wheeling and dealing, for heavenly transformation and not for earthly accommodation.

From what do we yearn to be healed? And what is the focus of transformation for all of us, as Caribbean people? In the simplest terms of our Christian proclamation, we yearn to be healed from sin in all its dimensions – structural, systemic, and personal. We yearn to be transformed by the gift of God's grace of reconciliation and forgiveness, that has been freely made available to us through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For as Paul reminds us: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not

counting our trespasses against us, but offering to us the ministry of reconciliation.” (II Cor. 5:19)

All of this becomes most powerfully obvious to us as we wrap ourselves with the Anthropology, Christology, and Pneumatology of the Fourth Gospel. The Risen Christ meets his friends exactly where they are. They are locked in an upper room because they are afraid of Jewish authorities. The very people who have just exterminated their leader are probably looking for them too.

One down, eleven more to go! Their feeling of fear is compounded by their feeling of being wrong. They are the wrong people. They are among the wrong people. They perhaps even feel wrong for not having done enough to save their leader from his demise. Fear and guilt are compounded by despair. All hope is lost! Abandon the mission! Let's go fishing again!

But Jesus comes through the closed doors of their lives, and Jesus always does through ours. He greets them with the Divine initiative – Shalom! God always acts first. God always greets first. God always breaks the ice. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” He breathes on them. The primordial act of breathing on creation is now renewed by God breathing again on the new creation.

And what is the new creation all about? What is this fresh gift of the Holy Spirit? It is a new mandate. It creates a fresh mission. The Apostolate of Forgiveness is now being established once and for all time. “Whoever sins you forgive they are forgiven; and whoever sins you retain they are retained”. The Apostolate of Forgiveness is what Paul calls the Ministry of Reconciliation.

The very first mandate which the Risen Christ gives to His Church is the mandate to Forgive. It is not their own forgiveness. Rather it is the proclamation of God's forgiveness. It is part and parcel of God's re-creative activity. The God who creates is also the God who recreates through us. That is the Apostolate of Forgiveness to which the Church is inalterably committed, and through which all of its mission and ministry must be unswervingly committed.

The Apostolate of forgiveness touches every dimension of our life and ministry in the church. It is the major thrust of our sense of divine vocation. It is the main source of our joy in the ministry; a ministry that is always in the service of God's hungry people everywhere, what else is left for us to do? What are we hanging about in the ministry for, if our work and witness does not offer to all others the new life for freedom, and the joy of God's transforming grace?

It is therefore in the active working out of the mission and ministry of Forgiveness, as a mandate from Jesus Christ, and the primary task of the Spirit-filled Church, that we come face to face with the major challenges of our day. In Biblical terms, we who are baptized into Christ have been buried with him and raised to newness of life. We therefore have the promise of being set free, being healed, being emancipated from all forms of slavery.

We taken into our system those powerful words of Paul in Galatians Chapter Five, Verse One: “For freedom, Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore and do not return again to any yoke of slavery.”

The healing from sin and slavery in all its forms in an ongoing work of Christ, that is being sustained through the workings and indwelling of the Spirit of God in Christ. In traditional terms we speak of “sanctification”. But in spite of all this fine talk, we still find ourselves returning to new forms of slavery, new forms of bondage. We who are to be the agents of God’s healing and transforming forgiveness, find that we are in dire need of that forgiveness ourselves. We are the wounded healers of our times, struggling to share in the apostolate of forgiveness from the alienation of sine, and yet captives of the sickness of cultural and spiritual slavery, of the new forms of bondage.

For example, in our Caribbean culture, right across all the linguistic and ethnic boundaries we still find ourselves patently prone to five forms of bondage, five grievings of the Spirit, all of which I myself am also guilty. One, our level of mutual *Contempt* continues to be inordinately high, so much so that we find it easier to pull down rather than to build each other up. Cultural familiarity still breeds social contempt prolifically.

Two, we continue to be *Complacent* with our sense of the need to be more self-reliant and self-sufficient, as a result of which we allow our human and material resources to be exploited by others, while we settle into a mode of mediocrity and unfinished results.

Three, our habits of *Consumption* are too excessive, and they are being driven mainly by a compelling proximity to the great colossus to the North with all the life-styles and temptations, and the ready availability of goods and services that overwhelm our capacity to create and our willingness to produce more for ourselves.

Four, there is a rapid thrust of individualism among us that shows itself in *Competition*, more often to the subversion of a spirit of community, and to the denial of sacrifice and selflessness.

Five, in an effort to explain, or explain away our absence of greater accomplishment, or a better stewardship or our time, talents, and opportunities, we are often tempted to offer words of *Compensation*. This sometimes issues forth into patterns of self-pity and self-excuse, and eventually into obvious deficits in moral rectitude. Contempt, Complacency, Consumption, Competition and Compensation – all these are grievings of the Spirit that serve no other purpose than to hold us in bondage to the major challenges of our region, and to the critical diseases of the human spirit.

What are these major challenges? Yesterday afternoon we were blessed with the very extensive and scholarly insights of Professor Neville Duncan about the crises and challenges facing the Caribbean region, mainly the English-speaking sectors. I wish to join with all those who have commended and thanked him for a very lucid analysis of the situation. Problems and challenges of all types abound – economic, social, moral, geo-

political, institutional, and educational – yet he has made bold to point us to some ways forward as a religious and prophetic community.

At the Sixth General Assembly in Cuba in 1997, Dr. Julio de Santa Ana listed Unemployment, Migration and Drugs as main problems in the region. Dr. Kingsley Lewis, the then Chair of the Praesidium, pointed to the deportation of criminals by the US Government, the marginalization of young men in the region by a failing education system and drugs and the increase of poverty. The then General Secretary, Dr. Monrelle Williams, highlighted poverty and underdevelopment, drugs, and the distribution of wealth as the key challenges. I tend to agree with all of the above. So now it is my turn to suggest a list!

My own view is that they are Systemic Poverty, Drug Culture, Health Impairments, Crime & Violence, the mis-education of our young people, Ecological Malaise, and the CNN Syndrome. Each of these has the power to determine the contexts in which we would seek to minister and bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Each has the potential to define the priorities of our common tasks, the anxieties of our societies, and the policies of our ecumenical endeavours. Each demands the urgent and concerted attention of our churches – both at the denominational and the ecumenical levels.

Poverty is not a virtue, even if it is possible to live a virtuous life while being poor. Poverty is not in itself a curse, though many would be tempted to regard it as such. Poverty is a scourge of our civilization, and there can be no equivocation in declaring war against it, and labelling it as a symptom of the human will, that is diseased by all forms of global inertia and unenlightened greed and self-centredness. It is not simply a question of who are the poor; it is also a question of why are they poor?

In his very important book *The End of Poverty*, published earlier this year, Dr. Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University has said this: “The greatest tragedy of our time is that one sixth of humanity is not even on the development ladder. A large number of the extreme poor are caught in a poverty trap, unable on their own to escape from extreme material deprivation. They are trapped by disease, physical isolation, climate stress, environmental degradation; and by extreme poverty itself...the world’s poor know about the development ladder: They are tantalized by images of affluence from halfway around the world.

But they are not able to get a first foothold on the ladder, and so cannot even begin the climb out of poverty” (pp. 19-20) Sachs speaks of degrees of poverty in the global family. The ‘extreme poor’ are the poorest of the poor representing 1 billion people; the ‘moderately poor’ are 1.5 billion, together they represent 40% of the human race. The ‘relatively poor’ are 2.5 billion; and the wealthy are 1 billion. Caribbean societies are obvious contrasts in this regard, for they encompass the wealthiest of the wealthy and the poorest of the poor. Sachs hardly mentions they Caribbean anywhere in the book.

It is difficult to find another area of the world on which more studies have been done than on the Caribbean. So many ask the question, where have all these studies gone? Why is

our region qualitatively poorer than it was three or four decades ago? Why has the emergence of political independence brought about new forms of economic dependence, and a fresh brand of neo-colonialism? Perhaps this Assembly will help us in pointing the way we must go for a truthful and trust-worthy answer.

In the meantime, recent suggestions for poverty reduction in the region include the following: 1) Business as usual must stop, and new forms of economic productivity must commence immediately. 2) Massive improvements in education systems and skills training are urgent. 3) Reduction in the size of governments is necessary for the enhancement of growth. 5) A climate of macroeconomic stability, including judicious borrowing, responsible public spending and accountability, and diligent management of debt must go hand in hand with the other four suggestions.

Where does the Caribbean church fit into all of this? If structural adjustments are required in the public square, what relevant adjustments are required in the sacred and religious sphere? Can it be business as usual for us, when our people in the pews are barely surviving in the trenches? If poverty is in fact a disease of the human spirit, where must healing and transformation be found in our witness for Christ and our solidarity with the poor? The late Eric Williams often reminded us that our chief resource in the Caribbean is our wits.

I would venture to add to that list our salubrious climate for health tourism, our creative arts and survival skills for self-sufficiency and social pride, our communicative and cultural skills, and the good rich earth and soil that others often seem to cherish much more than we do. These resources are sources of growth and self-fulfilment, and it is the inescapable duty of the church and its agencies to help our people to identify, appreciate, and exploit these resources as gifts from a loving God who sent the Son into the world that all might have life, and have it in all of its fullness.

The Drug Culture in the Caribbean is undoubtedly driven by the demands for narcotic substances globally, but especially in the North. Centuries ago it used to be said that sugar was king; and it was from sugar that rum was produced; and the Caribbean excelled in producing as much rum as was needed world-wide. Other products have now taken over the ascendancy from rum and alcohol, so much so that the addiction to alcohol is not seen as being dangerous as the addiction to other narcotic substances.

Nevertheless, whenever we speak of the drug culture in the Caribbean honesty requires that we still place alcohol at the top of the list; for God alone knows what difference would have emerged in our overall patterns of human development and social well-being, if we hadn't or if we didn't drink so much alcohol. Alcohol and drug dependence is the only disease that destroys meaningful human relationships, and damages the value systems that underpin the spiritual relationship between humankind and God. Added to this is the addiction to nicotine and tobacco that has often been allied to bad habits of health.

Yet nicotine and alcohol seem to recede into the background when we look at the other harder factors in the Caribbean drug culture. I am indebted to Professor Ivelaw Griffith, of Florida International University for his study of this culture and published in his book *Drugs and Security in the Caribbean: Sovereignty Under Siege*. Griffith comes to the conclusion that “the Caribbean has truly lost its innocence with the spread of drugs.” (p.50). He goes on to say that “drug use and the conspicuous consumption and ‘easy money’ associated with drugs become desirable social behaviour for some people in the Caribbean.” (p51)

Allow me to share with you one paragraph from his study. He writes: “Drug consumption and abuse are not limited to any single social class or economic or ethnic group, although the consumption of certain drugs is higher in certain groups. Marijuana, for example, is predominantly a working-class drug of choice. Crack cocaine is widespread among lower and middle-class people because it is considered ‘hard’ and a ‘status’ drug, but yet is cheap. Heroin, on the other hand, is a rich man’s drug. Hence, partly because of its cost, it is not widely available in the Caribbean, except in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Apart from the cost factor, the impact of heroin abuse in the region has been mitigated by what one Bahamian psychiatrist called a Caribbean ‘needle phobia’. But there is concern in many parts of the region that the liquid and smokable heroin now available in parts of Latin America will spread to the Caribbean. And given the increased heroin trafficking, it is realistic to expect spill over, as happened with cocaine. The result would be a larger number of heroin addicts.” (p.45)

Problems of production, trafficking, consumption, abuse, and social dislocations of all kinds are enormous in our region, and indeed, the Drug Culture clearly demands that we put on the breastplate of faith in God, arm ourselves with the shield of hope, and take up the sword of our collective sovereignty and join forces in an unprecedented demonstration of Caribbean interdependence and regional integrity to fight for the healing and transformation of our island-nations and allied territories.

The times are urgent, and the days are evil. Griffith suggests that all of this requires adequate training in countermeasures to the multidimensionality of the culture, partnership at many levels with states and other bodies, better strategies for interdiction of trafficking, a radical reduction in demand for drugs, and, as he puts it, “the political will of Caribbean political elites to make tough decisions about strategies and tactics for coping with the dilemma.” (p239) Is there a word from the Lord, spoken through this Assembly to the peoples of our lands? “Whom shall I send? And who will go out for us?”

Health Impairment is our third major factor to be confronted in this vision of human healing and Caribbean transformation. I have no doubt in my mind that the right to good health is one of the basic rights in the human family. At any rate, it is the healing miracle stories that constituted the main paradigm of the Jesus Story.

Peter said of his leader that he went about doing good and healing all the sick around him, for God was with him. Matthew speaks of his threefold mission and ministry as teaching, preaching, and healing. Health impairment then is not only a major challenge for Caribbean society as a whole, it is primarily a pre-eminent point of focus for the mission of the church, as it seeks to embody the extension of Christ's Incarnation.

Sir George Alleyne, the former Director of PAHO, and the current Chancellor of the University of the West Indies (UWI), has referred to health as that which makes us hale, hearty, and whole. He speaks of the call to health in our times, not as a utopian dream, nor as an impossible holy grail, but of health as 'the critical resource for living, it is what allows men and women to exercise fully their life options.' (*A Quest for Equity*, p.10)

Much more than that, Sir George also invites us to embrace what he calls the 'primacy of life'. He says: "The primacy of life entails for us not only survival but also some concern for the quality of that life. The right to life in some way implies the right to those states that make for a decent life, and high on the list of those states is health." (*Quest*, p.85)

The work of the CCC in fighting the pandemic of HIV/AIDS is to be highly commended. It has already begun to have some effect, and I trust that each member church has committed itself to get with the programme in earnest. But there are so many other facets to the issue of Health Impairment, that to put most of our eggs in the HIV/AIDS basket might be counter-productive.

For example, the South African experience has already demonstrated that there is a very close link between the spread of AIDS and rampant Alcoholism, and that alcohol creates a pre-condition for the spread of the HIV virus. It seems to be me therefore that if the linking of the fight against alcoholism is not closely allied to the fight against HIV/AIDS, then our programme relating to the latter might be marked by diminishing returns.

Other common diseases such as Diabetes, Hypertension, Asthma, Obesity, and some other tropical proclivities make the struggle for health and wholeness quite challenging. When this is allied to the increasing cost of the delivery of health care, and the declining access to affordable health insurance, the whole question of healing and health is itself transformed into a nightmare. But we cannot afford to roll over and court death. Our Christian mandate demands that we do everything to snatch life-making possibilities out of the jaws of death-making probabilities.

For because Christianity is essentially an Incarnational religion, the centrality of the body, and all that it implies for our relationship with God and each other, cannot be treated as less important than other demands or our moral stewardship, or our spiritual maturity. Our bodies are us, and without them we are no more. The health and transformation that is given in Christ and fulfilled through the Spirit, means absolutely nothing if we try to understand it apart from the body. Healthy minds and healthy bodies are the pre-requisites for wholesome souls and healthy spirits.

The fourth major challenge of Crime and Violence is perhaps the most numbing encounter of our Caribbean experience. Every country of the region has reported a rapid increase of crime and violence. The horror stories that emerge daily through the press and other media leave us speechless, fearful, and almost paralysed. The current debate in the region is throwing up a plethora of reasons for the phenomenal rise in crime and violence; but nothing has yet been suggested to give us a clear picture as to why we, who have been the historical victims of the worst forms of systemic violence and aggression.

The mountains of criminality and the peaks of violence dwarf our minds, and seem to weaken our capacity and resolve. But somehow or other, we must collectively find a way to transform our rhetoric of faith in God into the reality of action against all the fiery darts of the wicked. If it is true that such a retreat is only a strategic prelude before making a more effective advance. In the meantime, patterns of domestic and child abuse, as well as human depravity in inter-generational relationships, demand the most urgent and critical assault and renunciation on the part of our church communities.

The Fifth major challenge is the Mis-education of our youth. This is characterized by the dubious pedagogical styles, the unexciting patterns of learning and retention, the cultural deficits in the curricula, the paucity of employable skills-training, and the distortions by the political directorate.

Additionally, there is the Mal-education produced by the popular music culture that induces and encourages an increasing assault on the values of human decency and dignity, as well as an alienating effect on the rights and training of our young and tender minds, hearts, and future prospects. Full and wholesome human development is being subverted at a very early age.

The Sixth major challenge is our Ecological Malaise. Run-down neighbourhoods, toxic pollution, poor habits and systems of waste disposal, land erosion, mindless conversion of land-use, urban combustion, traffic congestion, sub-urban captivity behind wrought-iron bars, and the erosion of civic pride – all these contribute to this Ecological Malaise and environmental decay.

The Seventh major challenge is what I choose to call the “CNN Syndrome”. That is, there is a dominance of the communications air-waves by the American media – whether by news, analysis, or advertisements – and the transmission of values, information, and ideologies that are often out of keeping with the highest interests of liberating truth, or our cultural sovereignty.

In the light of all these considerations, therefore, can we as a theologically astute community construct a Caribbean Anthropology, Christology, and Pneumatology that will inform our life together as a band of pastoral, prophetic, and practical warriors for the Gospel? In this era of massive structural adjustments on every side, where we are being forced to do much more with much less, can we transform it into a spiritual and moral enrichment era? Can we turn the rhetoric of divine healing and spiritual transformation into the realities of Christian witness and practice, seeking to make a

difference in the places where God has sent us? What can we do better together than we cannot do equally well by ourselves? Is there a continuing pivotal role for the CCC in the mainstream of our denominational programmes and policies, or does this movement still enjoy the peripheral status as an ecumenical optional extra, as Roy Neehall used to put it?

Allow me to suggest a few signposts of a Caribbean Anthropology, Christology and Pneumatology that might be useful in any theological roadmap. First we look at the outlines of an appropriate Anthropology.

Because so much of the Caribbean Story has been marked by stages of human fortunes and misfortunes, by the marketing of human beings, and by the incubation and experimentation of human capital and prejudice, a Caribbean Christian Anthropology is still necessary for the full flowering of human society in our region.

Allow me to suggest these seven sign-posts for such a theological proposal.

1) The “Image of God” principle should be understood as a dynamic process on the way, still unfolding in us, rather than as a fixed status of our condition that is to be defined and determined by some over others.

2) Original Blessedness, as the mark of God creative work and will, imprinted on every life, regardless of colour or ethnic origin, is infra-structural and incidental in our nature. God saw that God had made, “and it was very good!”

3) “Original Sin” is neither ‘original’ nor ‘sinful’. It is simply the shadowy underside of our human freedom. The capacity to abuse our freedom is the underside of our capacity to consecrate it to the right relationship with God.

4) There is a “Connectivity” in our human existence that is genetic, generational, and generative. The fruit cannot fall far from the tree. In any case God created DNA; but we have only recently discovered it!

5) Culture and Religion are essentially projects of the human heart, hand, mind, and will – but because they are mutually supportive of each other, they are to be intimately and ultimately “theo-centric” (God-centred) in their virtue and value.

6) Human beings are blessed with human freedom, and are thus moral agents – making a decision of right and wrong. Moral agency is inseparable from our socio-cultural historical antecedents, but also from our personal accountability and responsibility. As moral agents, therefore, Caribbean people are participants in the five S’s of our Story: Solidarity, Struggle, sharing, Survival, singing.

7) Human Nature and Human Nurture are integrated in a random, provisional and progressive way. Because of this we dare not hide behind stereotypes, nor should we seek to pontificate on habits of the total human condition. There is always much more to us than meets the eye, or that we can understand. This link between Nature and Nurture undergirds notions of five other Caribbean S’s: Suffering, Sexuality, Spirituality, Sociality, and Sensitivity.

Next we turn to Christology. In the light of all that I have been suggesting in this presentation – the Left Hand of God syndrome, the modern experiments of sin, the forms of bondage which seem to me to be in existence, and the major challenges of our region at this time, it seems to me that the most outrageous claims that we can make about Jesus

of Nazareth is the crucial basis of our Christological paradigm. We are still making the claim that Christ is alive, because God raised Jesus from the dead.

So how do we practice the art of resurrection faith in the face of all death-making designs and devices on the market? We must explore and configure ways of expressing these seven characteristics of God's supreme miracle in Jesus: a. It is life assuring; b. It is Death re-defining; c. It is Love affirming; d. It is Hope empowering; e. It is Liberation personified; f. It is Re-humanization in action; and g.

It is the narrative of Re-Creation. For, in the final analysis every life has a narrative quality to it, and because Resurrection is transformation and not simply a resuscitation, the radical reversal of all that would diminish us, as our life-story unfolds, is the main thrust of the resurrection faith that a Caribbean Christology can seek to implement.

However, the critical piece in all of this is the central symbol of Christ himself. My proposal is that we shift from the "Christus Victor" symbol to the "Christus Hostia" symbol. That is to say, instead of interpreting the Resurrection in terms of Christ the Victor, let us interpret it in terms of Christ the Victim – the Victim with us, who knows all of our pain, and angst, and suffering, and need for healing and deliverance, but whose total obedience to God issues forth in his conversion of the meaning of suffering, and the transformation of death in to newness of life by the power of the life-giving God.

In that view, all suffering because of faith takes on a redemptive and transforming effect. I hold to the view that the resurrection of Jesus is God's supreme miracles in history, and not another miracle of Jesus himself. This is what makes John 3:16 so powerful a mantra – Christ the Gift is Christ the Victim, and Christ the Victim is Christ the Healer, Liberator, Saviour, and Lord. Caribbean reality finds more emancipatory spirituality in the "Christus Hostia" symbol, than it does in the triumphalist symbol of "Christus Victor".

Caribbean Pneumatology also takes into its system the need for translation for action and re-creative movement. Our theme has spoken of the healing and transformation of God that is given in Christ and fulfilled through the Spirit. Traditional Christian discourse gives prominence to the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit.

They are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, ghostly strength, knowledge, true godliness, and holy fear. The New Testament also speaks of the other gifts of the Spirit, as well as the fruit of the Spirit. All of these are understood to be involved in our theme of that which is fulfilled through the Spirit. Nevertheless, there is something distinctly Caribbean about the meaning of the Spirit, and it has to do with the Hebrew word for Spirit – "Ruach".

Ruach is involved in the Creation Story of Genesis. Ruach is involved in the enrolment an empowerment of the prophets as they confront the powers-that-be. Ruach is involved in the Incarnation and the enfleshment of God in the womb of Mary. Ruach is involved in the baptism of Jesus by John in the River Jordan. Ruach is involved in the birth of the

Church at Pentecost and in the forward march of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles.

Ruach is involved in the growth of the Church from twelve half-cowardly men and their story of Jesus to the survival of a community of faith that numbers over 2 billion members today. Ruach is wind, rushing might wind – just as we know so well in the hurricane season of our region. So it seems to me that we in the Caribbean can speak of the sevenfold gusts of the Spirit. What might these be?

- a. The Spirit creates out of anything, or even out of nothing;
- b. The Spirit convulses, turning realities inside out, and upside down, and right side up.
- c. The Spirit convicts with an energizing and liberating passion for the truth;
- d. The Spirit converts by the transforming grace of God's re-creative love;
- e. The Spirit convenes by creating community for witness and service in the Kingdom;
- f. The Spirit constructs new ways of breaking through the mysteries and uncertainties of life's complications;
- g. The Spirit constrains by helping us to remain faithful to the mission of the Gospel and the vision of the new creation. If we could come to embrace these sevenfold gusts of the Spirit of God, then we would perhaps arrive eventually at a more effective way of dealing with the excesses of claims – whether charismatic, glossolalic, or even Pentecostal, that we sometimes have to encounter.

For to be born of the Spirit is to be totally and unconditionally open to the surprising, and often crazy, ways of a God in whose image we are created. It also prevents us from attempting to recreate God in our own image. For the healing and transformation of which we have been speaking in this Assembly is totally unconditional, and there are no holds barred when God decides to heal and transform us, even from our very sinful and self-glorifying ways of life.

How then can we offer some programmatic suggestions for the purposive and productive implementation of such a Christological and Pneumatological framework? Let me end by throwing out a few thoughts from my often wild and unvarnished imagination. For I believe that we can always make a try in putting our theological imperatives to work for us. Here is what I would suggest.

Three general objectives appear to me to be obviously necessary. First, the Caribbean Church's understanding of its New Testament tasks need to be re-diagnosed and transformed. Its Preaching, Teaching, Worshipping, Serving, Fellowshiping all seem to be in fine form. However its tasks of HEALING, and PROPHETIC WITNESSING, and STEWARDSHIP all seem to need a new prescription and reconstruction.

Second, there is an urgent need for the Church in the Caribbean to take the lead in restoring and re-stocking the SOCIAL CAPITAL in the region. Social Capital involves the human, psychic, spiritual, moral dimensions of the society.

It relates to the trust-building, networking, courageous sacrificial service, skills training, organizational development, community building, moral formation, and family

reinforcement, that all need to be strengthened if redevelopment and social transformation are to take place.

There needs to be a re-discovery of “Civility” in Civil Society.

Third, Ecumenism-fatigue has set in, and can only seriously be addressed if initiatives in the reverse are radically embraced. “Ecumenism-from-Above” has been falling, and perhaps even failing. “Ecumenism-from-Below” appears to be the answer. Commissions and Councils and Committees of the top-brass and heavy-weights might well give way to the Coalitions and Cooperatives of those in Pain and Poverty of all kinds, those struggling in the trenches of our town and villages, and singing and praying on the benches of our conventicles. Such resources and personnel abound within the region, and do not require vast inflows of external funding, or heavy doses of external blessing.

As far as it is conceivable at the congregational level, why not seek out ways of establishing partnerships between congregations or varying denominations that are faced with similar challenges in the mission field? How about setting up some language clinics in various territories, run by a consortium of churches, so that the English-speaking folk will learn other languages and vice versa, but all may begin to learn Portuguese, Chinese, or Mandarin?

We would be foolish to ignore the fact that China is already becoming the new wave of the future, and Brazil is already a part of our New World story, but still waiting to be better known by us. Further, in order to make some advances in the area of health ministries, could there be some health support group programmes in our churches to help those who suffer from chronic diseases?

At the denominational level, perhaps the time has come to explore the use of the online technology for more distance learning in theological education. The Caribbean churches could benefit immensely from the resources available for theological formation on the information highway. Again, the management and reading of congregational life has become so complex and challenging, that a regional programme for congregational nurture, research, and renewal could be established in a convenient location for the benefit of many churches.

At the ecumenical level, the CCC could be empowered and resourced to establish and maintain some specific programmes that would foster closer collaboration between member churches. These could include a calendar of celebration, commemorations and observances simultaneously throughout the region, especially in the honouring of Caribbean heroes and heroines, or, if you prefer the generation of a Caribbean-wide hagiography. Caribbean Christians and ancestors are worthy of sainthood, just as much of as any other nationalities.

Further, the enhancement and strengthening of youth programmes of all kinds throughout the region continues to be of critical importance. The CCC should be encouraged to implement programmes of youth enrichment and inter-generational nurture, especially as

there is clearly a battle being waged in the region for the soul and spirits of our young people.

Finally, perhaps the time has come for a special institution to be founded by the ecumenical movement in the region that would focus particularly on pastoral care, pastoral counselling, spiritual formation, and transformational leadership. Models that are learned and embraced in the North are not readily transferable to the local contexts in the Caribbean.

In any case, we have certainly reached the stage in the development of our own processes of formation, that we can train our own folk in the appropriate ways of caring for, counselling, and leading our people in the paths of justice, peace, and true holiness.

These then are my rambling thoughts for today. They represent my exploration of the theme for this Assembly. It is my hope that whatever we determine in these days will be for the edification of the church of God in these Caribbean territories, and that the future of the CCC will be assured by the firm and irrevocable commitment to its mandate for peace, justice, wholeness, and the healing and transformation of all, in solidarity with the poor.

I will end with a well-worn saying of the ecumenical movement. As we go forward into the future, which is God's transforming future, let us not think ourselves into a new way of acting, but rather let us act ourselves into a new way of thinking. THANK YOU.