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What is that in your Hand? Realising Africa's Potential

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Introduction: the sad state of affairs

Africans are disheartened by the numerous problems they face; and many of them are tormented by the idea that they are helpless to handle their own problems and that they need outsiders first of all to explain their problems to them, and then to work out the solutions for them. Some of the African people have accepted the lie that they have neither the potential nor the resources to develop their own continent, and have adopted the song "Oh! We poor Africans!"

This unfortunate situation has even made Africans hate the fact that they are Africans. When they are identified with Western culture, they feel prouder and more competent than when they are associated with their own culture. Many are leaving their countries because they do not see any hope of God working in and through them in their own continent. While there may be justification for some to leave because of war or other compelling problems, others are fleeing for the wrong reasons. They are running away because they hope to find meaning and prosperity in the West.

We need to ask ourselves, is it true that Africans are incompetent? Do they really lack the resources to develop their own continent? Is it true that Africa's problems can only be solved by non-Africans? Africans sometimes feel like Moses felt in the wilderness when God called him to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage: useless and inadequate. But God made it clear to him that he had enough resources to do the job. He asked Moses what was in his hand; Moses' reply was "a staff." That staff became the symbol of God's power and it was used to do many things in connection with the Israelites' deliverance. Moses did not recognise the power of what he was holding. God showed him that he was expected to use what he had rather than what he did not have. If he did, God would bless him by enabling him to bring deliverance to his people.

This article is meant as an encouragement to my fellow Africans to accept the reality that we are holding something powerful, something to be excited about, in our own hands. We do not have all, but we have something. If we can truly believe this, things are bound to happen. International resources will always be welcome and in fact appreciated, but will not be a prerequisite for igniting development (by which is meant comprehensive development and not just economic development).

When African leaders keep looking to Western institutions such as IMF, the World Bank and the like as their only hope, then the African continent is doomed to more suffering. This slavish attitude is a major factor in Africa's social, political and economic crises. This is not meant to downplay the role of such Western institutions in Africa's development but is meant as a warning that Africans need to beware of what is good and what is not good for them.

As we focus on Africa's problems and the solutions to them, we need to examine the Western attitude toward Africa, its concept of development and the driving force behind this concept. But first, let us consider what Africans are doing to curb their own problems.

Is it true that Africans are doing nothing?

Most Africans do not document their work

Africans are repeatedly told "not to wait for the West." Is it true that Africans are waiting for the West to do the job for them? At face value this may appear so, but the reality is quite different. Africans are busy solving their own problems. The most fundamental problem is that, unlike their Western friends, they do not keep records of what they are doing. Therefore, when they are asked to show what they have accomplished, they have nothing to point to; consequently, the erroneous conclusion is that they are doing nothing.

Africans are busy with their fundamental problems

Secondly, Africa is faced with a huge diversity of problems, some of which are more fundamental than others. Because Africans are not seen solving the fundamental problems, it is always assumed they are doing nothing. For instance, a peasant African family which sees its fundamental duty as that of feeding the family will sell all its labour to ensure that food is found. No one keeps a record of where the food is found and when, but the reality is that most of the family members are up by 5:00 a.m., returning to their homes late in the day with the daily food supply. This is the trend and this group forms the majority of the African population. However, the major media (internet, newspapers, TV and radio) do very little in reporting this African initiative. Although it is real news, it is not News to them. A peasant woman carrying wood and water from a far distance is considered newsworthy only when a Women's Liberation Movement needs a case concerning the oppression of women.

African initiatives are not the priority of the media

Thirdly, since the media is controlled by the West, it is little wonder that it gives far more press to Western initiatives than to any African initiatives. Details considered newsworthy in newsletters that reach us from the West often seem to us just a joke. To Africans, birthday celebrations and announcements about newborns are not news; here, there are many children whose parents don't even keep track of their birthdays. The arrival of a newborn is often just an additional problem rather than a cause for celebration.

Consider this specific case: In a village known as Karara in the Kitale area of Kenya, a makeshift bridge was damaged, causing the villagers many problems. Luggage would drop into the overflowing river, and in some especially unfortunate instances, donkeys ferrying luggage would drown. The bridge was the only gateway to the market and to other essential services; its damage caused the villagers much distress. This never featured as news. One gentleman—a product of the village and a hard-working fellow—saw the fate of his villagers and was touched. He took it upon himself to motivate his friends to help the villagers build a better bridge. He succeeded in raising good support; and a permanent bridge which even supports light vehicles was erected. Up to the time of this article, this story never became “news.” But suppose this had been done by an NGO—especially a Western NGO. In that case, it would certainly have hit media headlines.

Even on a larger scale, Western media commonly ignore African initiatives. A striking example is the recent major breakthroughs in blood screening technology for hepatitis B and HIV and the development of an effective, inexpensive treatment for the herpes virus developed by African scientists at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI). These have been recognised by competent medical scientists in the developed world as cutting edge technological breakthroughs but have attracted little, if any, attention in the Western media.

Perhaps it is because this media silence has left him ignorant of the African potential that Bill Gates, of Microsoft, announced that he was providing substantial funding to Western pharmaceutical companies to develop new medical solutions for African health problems. While this may or may not help Africa, it will certainly further enrich the already rich Western societies. Had he funded an African body such as KEMRI, the solutions found would have been more appropriate to Africa and would, at the same time, have aided Africa's economic development.

African initiatives are not marketable

Fourthly, African initiatives are not covered in the media because of the commercial nature of the media. The media reflects news that will sell. Anything that does not sell has no meaning in the modern institutionalised commercial market. John White (1993, 47) captures it well when he talks of masses being induced toward certain products not because of their quality or usefulness but simply for the profit to the manufacturer. The question today is not “What is the value of this?” but “How well does it sell?” This is another reason why Africans are perceived as doing nothing and only waiting upon the West. It is an arrogant perception, outrageous and untrue. Africans may not be doing as much as they could, but they are doing a great deal.

The best media cover for Africa is gloom and doom

Finally, the media regularly portray Africa as a place of gloom and doom. People outside the continent seldom hear anything positive about Africa (van der Walt 2002, 94). Instead, Africa is portrayed as a sick, starved, bleeding and crippled continent crying for help from the West day after day (Ndungu 1999, 262).

A major study of the pattern of news reporting of developing countries by Western news media conducted by the French organisation Commission Coopération Développement (1992) was conclusive on two important issues in relation to Africa:

Africa is the only region in which no discrimination is made between different regions or countries. Reporting gives the impression that bad things happening in one African country are typical of all of Africa. The overwhelming bulk of news reports on Africa focus on negative events while the many positive developments are rarely reported. This pattern of biased reporting applied to no other region in the world.

We thank God that some Western communities have come to consider Africans as counterparts. They have come to understand that Africa may have something that is lacking in the West and that Africa could actually be seen as a resource centre. Such people perceive Africans not as beggars but as people who have something to offer the West. They know that African value is not found in the market or in the media, but within the real people with whom they work and intermingle.

A critical analysis of the West

Concept of development

It is completely naive to suppose that Africans do not need any support from outside to develop their own continent, but it is equally unreasonable to accept without question anything coming from the West. It is even difficult to critique the Western concept in the fear of sounding and being branded as reactionary or looking naive. In this article, a sober way of critically evaluating the Western concept will begin with an appeal to the work of those in the West. Goudzwaard (2001, 27) indicates how difficult it may be to critique the Western concept when he says: "To hypothesize that the Western mind has been narrowed and distorted could be very risky as well as far-reaching. It needs to be tested."

Fowler (2002, 81), on the other hand, notes a disturbing situation of flawed development in the West. He observes that a complete development must provide a social environment which promotes human well-being in all its dimensions. A careful examination of the West indicates a failure in this. Glowing pictures of economic prosperity with everyone having access to a glittering array of consumer products are presented as typical. The problems of deprivation appear, at best, as footnotes, commonly with the implication that they are due primarily to flaws in the individuals concerned.

He further notes that the myth and reality of today's developed society, which is fundamentally flawed, is so because of the flawed belief system that supports it. The belief system he observes rests on two fundamental premises: that economic prosperity, evidenced in ever-increasing market consumption, is the basis for human well-being; and that economic prosperity is secured by social policies that give priority to the interest of a self-regulating market. This is typical of ideological capitalism—to be distinguished from capitalism as simply a way of ordering economic relations in society. This then is viewed by Fowler not as a way of organising economic relations but as a religious faith defining the meaning of life in secular language. Rejecting the two fundamental premises of ideological capitalism, Fowler observes that without some form of guidance, we cannot expect market mechanisms to deliver good outcomes.

Fowler (2002, 82–83) rejects the argument that the above social policies are adopted in the interests of increased prosperity for commercial interest to increase prosperity for everyone, on the ground that all the evidence is that wealth consistently flows to the top (both within a country, and internationally between the already rich countries of the West)—contradicting the "trickle-down" effect—the myth that increased wealth at the top trickles down to the poorest in the society.

Fowler is not alone in this. Goudzwaard (2001, 23) observes that financial flow is concentrated in the Western hemisphere even though many pressing economic needs are evident in the South and East. In citing the World Investment Report of UNCTAD (1999), he indicates that 91% of the worldwide foreign direct investment flows to the United States, Europe and Japan, while the poorest and most indebted

nations receive scarcely any benefit. A remarkable phenomenon is the unequal balance between the “real sphere” and the “financial sphere” in the international economy. Only 5% of international money is used for the purpose of buying and selling of goods and services in the real sphere. The other 95% is used for purely financial transactions.

The West has problems too

The perception of Africa as a continent of doom leaves the impression that the West is heaven on earth. It is not always recognised as having serious problems of its own. Africans need to be aware of the problems in the West so that they may appreciate that they are not cursed by God. Citing various sources, Stuart Fowler establishes a list of problems in connection with the West:

Growing inequality

Though sustained economic growth has made developed countries richer, there is a significant gap between the rich and the poor in the West. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in the United States—published in *The Economist* (December 20, 1997) shows that the income of the poorest 20% of people in the United States had declined by 21% while the income of the richest 20% had increased by 30%.

Negative impact on health

Serious and growing health problems directly associated with development have been reported in developed societies, according to the World Health Organization Reports (1997 and 1998). They point out that though infectious diseases are well under control in the developed societies, other chronic diseases directly associated with the lifestyles of these countries are a major threat to human well-being in those societies. Such diseases include cancer, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and low back pain, among others. A report by the World Health Organization shows that mental disorders like depression, schizophrenia and dementia are also rife.

Escalating violence

Clear evidence of increasing violence is noted in developed societies. In fact, according to the World Health Organization, violence tends to pervade the whole society, unlike in developing countries where violence is found mainly in hot spot areas.

Drug abuse

This is a worldwide problem whose basic causes, according to the World Health Organization, are closely related to social conditions associated with modern developed society.

Crisis of care

With the increasing wealth of developed societies, one would expect that care is given high priority, but actually the opposite is true. Care is given the lowest priority. This is the “paradox of care” as observed by Goudzwaard and de Lange in their critique of orthodox economic theory. Since labour given to care is considered “transductive labour”—that is, labour that does not have market value—the trend towards commercialisation of care and reduced public support of activities of care is also evident in the developed Western societies. Care is only available to those who can afford it.

Employment, unemployment and underemployment

Closely related with the paradox of care, Goudzwaard and de Lange also speak of the “paradox of labour.” We find in developed societies significant levels of unemployment on the one hand, and an urgent and increasing need for labour on the other hand. The World Health Organization (1998, p.136) reports that unemployment in developed societies is much higher now than it was in 1950-1970. Coupled with this is the dilemma that many people are seeking full-time employment but all that is available is part-time employment (Fowler 2002, 75-80).

The purpose of enumerating these problems is to show that Africa and other developing countries are not unique; problems are everywhere and in fact Western societies have some problems of an even greater magnitude. It should encourage Africans to know that problems are not a barrier to prosperity

if prosperity is understood in proper terms. Secondly, Africans need to be well aware that moving to the West will not mean moving to a problem-free zone. Many unsuspecting Africans who emigrate to the West become prey to these problems—particularly drug abuse and even mental disorders. The fact that those in the West have not given up in the midst of their problems should be an encouragement to Africans that they too can make it in the midst of their multiple problems.

What has gone wrong with Africans?

Little or no regard for African world view

As Africans try to handle their own problems, they often operate with a total ignorance or disregard for the African culture and world view. Developing and understanding the African world view is thought to be tedious and unnecessary. Preoccupation with the secularised Western culture has eclipsed efforts to reflect on the importance of the African world view. Hasty solutions adopted from Western culture are imposed on Africa. Africans accept the deception that their problems will overtake them if they take the time to develop their own world view; thus they fall prey to adopting any solution easily available. The African problem is already a big one, but half-baked solutions only add to the problem. There are no short cuts in trying to establish solutions. This means that we must at all costs understand ourselves within our unique context, and from that vantage point we must address our problems. This is impossible unless we understand our culture and world view.

BJ van der Walt, speaking on culture and world view, observes that culture includes our ordinary attitudes, customs, behaviour, values, beliefs, institutions, etc. It is not necessarily acquired by (formal) education, nor is it reserved for a specific sector of the population. Every human being is a cultural being. Culture is our “frame of reference” for human thought and conduct. We are hardly aware of it; it is like the air we breathe. We are programmed by our own culture, and become aware of it when something goes awry or when we encounter people of other cultures (van der Walt 2001, 49).

A world view is our perspective on created reality, an indication of our place in the world in which we have to fulfil our cultural task, the direction of which is provided by the will (laws) of something or someone regarded as our absolute authority in life. A world view functions like a map, providing orientation; like a compass, it gives direction from a deep religious commitment (van der Walt 2001, 58).

It is unthinkable that solutions for Africa will ever be found without due respect for culture and world view. This calls for hard work, but it is certainly not impossible. We will succeed if we put our minds to it and when we stop accepting half-baked solutions. This paper will not develop in detail the concept of culture and world view, but intends only to point to their importance and to warn that disregard of them is to our own peril.

Much change but very little adjustment to the change

There are huge changes taking place in the social, economic and religious dimensions of our world today. Adjustment to these changes, however, is not happening with equal speed. This means that as Africa tries to work out its solutions it faces an even harder task. Most people find themselves working on policies that are already outdated given the contemporary setting. Institutions of learning find themselves working on curricula that do not address the current issues. Most Christian colleges are working with curricula established by missionaries in the early part of the last century. The slavish commitment to such curricula produces graduates who are already out of date before they begin.

Conversely, those who are educated outside the African context feel like fish out of water when they return to Africa. A recent conversation with a colleague in the US demonstrates how frustrating this can be. Here is a person who studied at a higher educational institution in the US and is now working there. But when she first tried to return to her own country, she felt like a misfit. She met strange things in offices, streets filled with potholes and hawkers everywhere. She couldn't wait to board the plane and get back to the US. She feels more at home in America where she has acquired citizenship, than in her own country where she is a citizen by birth. These sentiments do not surprise me because I study, live and work in that environment. This does not mean, however, that all those studying and working outside this continent have an inferior grasp of what is taking place in Africa. Given the internet and other media services, combined with good interaction with issues at the grass-roots level, some outside this continent have a better grasp of the contemporary situation than those in the continent. All

serious-thinking Africans, whether living here or elsewhere, (and particularly those in the Christian community) need to work hard in order to make sense of our contemporary situation.

Brain drain

The continent of Africa can be compared to a mother who bore the labour and birth pains of her children only to be abandoned later by them when they were of age and she was ailing in her final years. Africa has produced exceptional professionals who have exhausted her resources but are now benefiting other continents. Most of these professionals have escaped to avoid the frustrations and hard political and socio-economic conditions of their own countries. Some have been lured by Western luxuries. Our continent is writhing in pain for lack of professionals despite the fact that it has produced all types of professionals. Africa is eagerly waiting to see the integration between what has been learned and the realities on the ground. This is difficult given the prevalence of brain drain.

Scholarly community remaining in an academic island

Whereas brain drain is perceived as a major problem, the problem will not be automatically solved by the academic community remaining in the continent. Most academic communities exist in an academic Island. There is very little interaction between what goes on in the academic community and non-academic circles. The non-academic community interacts with the academic community only at the level of professional consultations—for example, when seeking medical or legal help, or when buying services such as insurance. A healthy relationship—where the non-academic community has input in academic circles and vice versa—is not evident in our continent. The result is that the contributions of the academic community meet with resistance from the non-academic community. Conversely, the academic community views with disrespect any initiatives that come from the non-academic community. In Kenya, for instance, the polio vaccine was rejected in some rural areas because it was interpreted as a sinister attempt by the government to wipe out some communities. This was because the two communities rarely interact except in such professional activities.

When these two communities remain alienated, opportunists take advantage. This is not uncommon in Africa. For instance, resistance to the polio vaccine in some parts of Kenya was the result of some street preachers who misled their communities by raising the alarm with regard to the government's effort to save its own people from the deadly disease. There are people who are suffering because professional advice or a service was hampered by opportunists. Some people have fallen prey to destructive faiths because the opportunity for a better alternative was obstructed by opportunists. All of these situations are worsened by the gap between the academic and the non-academic community.

Lack of support for local initiatives

My first experience of air travel is a good example of this point. It took some time before I could be convinced to choose Kenya Airways. In our culture, we are brought up to disdain local products. I had never believed that Kenya Airways could offer attractive services. For this reason, I wanted another airline, assuming that since it was not a Kenyan airline, it had to be better. But since our agent was not dealing with South African Airways, I was forced to opt for Kenya Airways. My travel turned out to be most enjoyable and I later heard from someone who had used both airways, who told me there was no comparison.

Local initiatives lack support for two main reasons. Firstly, local initiatives are despised by the locals themselves (as evident from my airline story). Locals tend to look down on initiatives by their fellow countrymen and almost worship the foreigners' initiatives. Secondly, foreign support for Africa tends to give preference to programmes that fit foreign objectives. This means that if Africa and other third world countries won't fit in with the western support organizations, their objectives must be shaped by the objectives of those organizations. These two reasons have caused local initiatives to suffer a great deal. This paper seeks to inspire African pride in local initiatives and the celebration of African potential.

Frustrations as the status quo is tampered with

It is worthwhile to identify several frustrations brought about by the status quo:

Firstly, we think of the psychological frustration that results when inferior work receives maximum support because it supports the status quo, while superior work, done with a proper focus, misses out on such support. It is painful that those who offer work of inferior quality know how to play their cards well. They are able to attract the masses because they do not threaten the status quo; the masses are unfortunately ignorant of the way they are being enslaved. As a result, those who attempt quality work sometimes give up in frustration, and allow their work to degenerate to satisfy the status quo. Most African leaders have had this experience at one time or another.

Secondly, we have the frustration of those who benefit from the status quo. There are many African leaders who are comfortable with the status quo. As long as status quo is maintained, their positions and leadership are maintained. If the status quo is broken, their livelihood is threatened. It is quite absurd that some messes in Africa have become other peoples' livelihood. Such leaders reap where they have not planted. Unfortunately, whenever active and creative groups attempt to liberate people by challenging the status quo, the beneficiaries of the status quo rise up in arms against them. As is evident from history, reformers do not have it easy. Unfortunately most of us in Africa do not understand this. When such people rise up against attempted reforms, the tendency is for the African reformers to give up and give in—thus furthering the enslaving of the masses. The beneficiaries of the status quo do not recognise the truth that “the higher you go the cooler it becomes.” Since it is always hot at the bottom, they are always on the run to defend the status quo in order to maintain their status. As they frustrate others, they inevitably become even more frustrated themselves because at some point the status quo is broken and they find themselves in trouble.

Thirdly, there is the unfortunate frustration of those for whom liberation is attempted because the status quo beneficiaries have convinced them that change is destructive and that proponents of change are radicals who are misled. The radicals and those that are misled sometimes manage to remove from the scene those who attempt positive reforms. They unfortunately do this by misusing those whom the reforms are intended to benefit.

These frustrations are cited to encourage those who have resigned from the reform battle to return to the field in full swing if the status quo enslavement is ever to be tackled. It is also meant as an encouragement: the battle is right and good, and has far-reaching effects. Finally, this is meant to help us understand that to realise Africa's potential will require overcoming a number of major hurdles.

The resources at hand

We have a rich culture

The African culture is rich in values—values which are being threatened by secularisation. There are cultural strands through which reforms and support for African development can be effected without much strain. We think of family ties, for example. A single family fellowship brings together all types of people—people of differing age groups, professions, denominations, sexes, economic abilities and interests. Family gatherings are still viewed with respect, rather than with the selfishness brought about by secularisation. Every African member has a ready-made resource group to jump-start any endeavour he or she tries to initiate, because of the rich cultural tradition which promotes family life. John S. Mbiti notes, “For the African peoples the family has a much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe or North America. In traditional society, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives” (Mbiti 1969, 106). The household is the smallest unit of the family, consisting of the children, parents and sometimes the grandparents. This is what one may call ‘the family at night,’ for it is generally at night that the household is really itself. The household in Africa is what in European and American societies would be called ‘family’ (Mbiti 1969, 107).

Sense of Trust

Other values implicit in African culture include the nurturing of trust in people. Once honesty has been observed, the African community is satisfied even without the evidence of detailed proposals, pictures and diagrams. We are assured of financial and other essential support within the African community without wasting a great deal of money and time trying to embellish or exaggerate our doings. One

might argue that Africans can be abused; but the same is true of western culture. How many of our brothers and sisters from the West are known to exaggerate what they are doing by use of pictures, videos and other uncalled-for diagrams in order to convince others of what they doing when in reality there is nothing on the ground?

In the year 2004, Community Penetration Christian Ministry initiated a farming project. The organization had no money for the project. Established organizations would have required detailed proposals and a lot of explanations, which would have meant waiting a whole year before anything was accomplished. The director of CPCM resorted to sending short e-mails to the African communities in Kenya. In a month's time, the organization had enough money to do the ground work and a few months later there was enough money for the project. At the close of the year, the yield was so good that there was enough money to run the office and carry on with the project for the following year. Once trust is built, there is already an existing base support within the African community to assist any development endeavours. This may sound absurd, but it is a fact waiting to be realised.

Rich sense of community

In the African context, the individual does not exist and cannot exist except in community. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations. Simply put, he is part of the whole. It is the community which makes the individual; and the individual is completely dependent on the corporate group. Physical birth is not enough: the child must go through rites of incorporation so that he or she becomes fully integrated into the entire society. These rites continue throughout a person's life; the individual passes from one stage of corporate existence to another. The final stage is reached when he dies and even then, he is ritually incorporated into the wider family of both the dead and the living (Mbiti 1969, 108). This reality holds a potential waiting to be realised. The sense of belonging means that Africans own one another. One's success is not his or hers alone. One's assets are not his or hers alone. In this sense, those without cannot claim to have nothing in Africa because what a neighbour owns is theirs also. Although modern secularism—with its individualist mentality—is threatening to wipe out this communal spirit, it is still true that fundamentally one African's assets are always accessible to others. It is for this reason that we own money in banks even when we do not have bank accounts. This strength of community is yet another example that we have in hand something powerful, but we have not realised it.

Intelligent minds

We would not speak of brain drain in Africa if there were no brain to be drained. One need only to visit Jua Kali Industries (in Kenya, these are industries operated in open spaces) to realise the brilliant minds that have produced these technologies. Attend to African riddles and proverbs to realise the richness of African wisdom; feel African art to understand the aesthetic brilliance to be found on African soil. In the academic field, Africa has renowned scholars respected in and outside Africa. In this respect, Africa has no shortage of resources; the only problem is that either they are not realised and utilised, or they are misused.

Recently a colleague who has participated in our Kitale Annual Christian Professional Conferences invented a cereal drier which could be used by local farmers. When I interviewed him, he said it was the only one in the District. He observed the farmer's risk of losing the crops during rainy harvesting periods. This motivated him to invent a portable drier which, in a few hours, could quickly dry the farmer's whole supply of cereal. This invention solves three problems: first, the unaffordable cost of drying at the cereal boards (resulting in big losses); second, the cost of transport—which most farmers cannot afford; and third, the inconveniences for the farmers (especially those hiring land)—for the cereal can be shelled and dried on-site at the farm and from there can be taken to the market. With this new invention, the farmer can grow the cereals and market them directly from his farm or from the land that he has rented. Africa is not lacking intelligent minds; all that is needed is their realisation and utilisation.

Tangible resources such as land, skills, tourist resorts, art

Africa sits on food, yet cries and dies of starvation; she walks on gold, yet cries of scarcity. It is still a question whether Africa is poor because it is lacking resources or because resources are under-uti-

lised. Is Africa over-populated, or are Africa's resources under-utilised to sustain her population? Is unemployment, or Africa's attitude towards employment, the problem? We have cried about Africa's problem but now it is time to understand that Africa has no problem but the African people. Many people—especially the younger generation—are migrating from the resource areas (rural) to areas with scarce resources (urban). In the cities they become frustrated because they never really find what they went looking for. Often they return to their homes—Africa's resource areas—in coffins or as sick weaklings because of AIDS, drugs, alcohol, depression and other vices.

We are experiencing a situation where young people leave farms with hundreds or thousands of acres and move to urban areas in search of jobs with earnings of less than US \$130 per month. Much of this is spent on paying for the resources they have left at home. We understand their situation; rural life is hostile with a lack of good infrastructure, social amenities, incentives, sanitation and even security. It is unfortunate that we in the scholarly community have led the way for the migration of people away from the resource areas.

This is yet another example that we already have something at hand. All we need is to find better ways of utilising it. If infrastructures, social amenities, sanitation, incentives and security are not available in resource areas, are we as Christians justified in running away from such areas and totally ignoring them as we pursue our ministry agenda? Isn't the situation now becoming reversed? Are the problems we are fleeing not catching up to us in the urban areas? The urban is now becoming ruralised, forcing us to think about urbanising the rural areas. When the resourceful rural areas are given the dignity they deserve, the urban areas will regain their dignity as well. Unfortunately we often perceive this as a challenge for the government to deal with. But, no! It is our challenge as the Christian community in our different professional callings. Community Penetration Christian Ministry has embarked on this, and this is motivating especially the younger generation to stay and improve what they already have, leaving only when other opportunities offer better chances by far. CPCHEA (the African branch of IAPCHE) seems to be catching on to this approach as well.

In Kenya, until recently, moving to the capital city Nairobi was seen as the solution to all problems, and people moved there in mass. Now it seems the solutions are sought abroad. I believe the same trend is happening in other African countries. But is the situation abroad really so promising? You only need to interview a few people to realise the truth that utilising and realising Africa's potential is the way forward for Africa's problems.

Giving the rural areas the dignity they deserve will mean the following for the Christian professional community: First, they must stop focusing their ministry targets and priorities only in urban areas. Second, they must be willing to invest in rural areas. Third, we as a Christian community must pool our resources to improve the rural infrastructure, sanitation, social amenities, and security, and we must provide incentives for those attempting to provide dignity to the rural areas. Fourth, our educational systems should assist in planting the African people firmly in their own soil. It is very unfortunate that our educational systems are training people to become local birds with a foreign walk. They are training people only to get certificates; what they really need are the skills to match those certificates. African communities need to be taught to get juice from African rocks; otherwise the rocks will never give juice and the African communities will keep thirsting for juice while they trample the Africa rocks. Unfortunately, the African Christian community looks to the government to do these things, while really we should be the ones to provide leadership to our governments in those areas.

5. Re-thinking afresh

Appreciating our Africanness

The history of Africa points to the devastating effects of slave trade, colonialism and even the advent of missionary work; those are major causes for the disorientation of the African personality. Restoring the dignity, pride and aspirations of Africans, restoring their self-esteem and self-confidence, will require strenuous effort. Nahashon Ndung'u (1999, 258-259), shows that the whole concept of African personality has to do with the recovery of their lost dignity and the recognition of their unique identity as a people. The struggle involves overcoming long-established feelings of inferiority and alienation.

As has been established in this paper, there are many problems with those Western institutions that tend to be relied upon to generate Africa's solutions. Since Africans understand themselves better, it is

vital that they come to the ground and face their own problems. Ndung'u (1999, 263) has an interesting challenge for the African people. He notes:

"The burden of reconstructing a positive image of Africa lies in the hands of Africans themselves! They should not expect the very people from America and Europe who have in the past enslaved and colonized them as well as exploited their resources to have a change of mind for the better of Africa."

The wholesale discrediting of all people in America and Europe is not the point here; it is actually the case that some of these people carry more of a burden for Africa than some Africans do themselves. A commendation for their participation in African issues will be mentioned later. However, as Ndung'u notes, care must be taken to ensure that the African personality is not destroyed, because if it is, the African becomes just an "object" that is hated and that hates itself. Such self-rejection, Ndung'u laments, has been demonstrated by the intellectuals who have forfeited their cultural values and hence have nothing to offer to the rest of the world. To them, he exclaims (Ndung'u 1999, 264):

"Any attempt by the African elite to run away from mother Africa will not offer a solution. It is an outright denial of one's roots. The solution lies in making one giant leap in the opposite direction and becoming true Africans, proved in their heritage and African personality!"

We must also emphasise here that sitting down and blaming our history will not be helpful. We need to make history by reforming our continent, in the proper understanding that God did not make a mistake by making us Africans and placing us in the continent of Africa. We should also not underestimate our own evils. Postcolonial Africa is marked by vices such as corruption, religious hypocrisy, and totalitarianism in the state and in churches, tribalism, ethnicity, violence and war. The devastating effect of the Fall of man must be addressed in our attempt to reform our continent.

Understanding our world view

It has been established in this paper that a world view functions like a map, providing orientation; like a compass, it gives direction from a deep religious commitment. Ignoring such a fact is to one's own peril. The focus of this paper is not to establish the mechanisms of developing a world view but just to point to its place in the development of Africa. Those interested in understanding the Christian world view can refer to the works of Wolters (1985) and van der Walt (2001), among others. But having said that, it needs to be established that what is advocated in this paper is the African world view that is grounded in the Word of God, the African world view that is biblical.

Talking of a biblical world view means a total rejection of the dualistic world view—whether clothed in biblical language or any other language. The dualistic world view divides reality into secular and sacred. It categorises issues related with the discipline of theology to be sacred and those falling outside this realm to be secular or profane. Preaching, lecturing in seminaries, evangelistic work, Bible study, prayer, etc., are viewed as sacred, while business, politics, lecturing in public universities, teaching in high schools and so on are regarded as profane or secular. This is a very old world view which is rooted in Greek philosophy and which stole its way into the Christian tradition in the early, medieval and modern period.

Struggling with how the dualistic world view was incorporated into Christianity, van der Walt (2001, 7) exclaims:

"....In the case of Christianity the implication was that the all-encompassing kingdom of God—wide as creation itself—was restricted to only one area, viz. man's cultic or confessional life viewed as inherently sacred or holy. Or, to turn the statement around: church life was absolutised so that it encompassed the kingdom of God. Such a situation of the Kingdom of God in principle excludes the possibility that his kingdom embraces the whole world. Having tied the Bible, religion and God's kingdom to the church, one cannot present a genuine biblical witness in other areas of life."

It is unfortunate that the Gospel as it was presented to Africa, as well as much of the Christian work currently being done here, are based on this dualistic world view. We can see clearly the dilemma in which we are placed. Van der Walt warns that it is very difficult to abandon dualism once it has become an inherent part of our Christian world view (van der Walt 2001, 30). It is not an easy enemy to eradicate.

The Christian professional seminars held in Kitale, Kenya for the past some years have attempted to promote a more biblical world view. These seminars have seen the production of a book entitled

“The Christian Professional: Called to the service of love.” This book (Fowler 2002, 551) demonstrates that professional activities of all kinds are a calling by God for Christian service. He shows that only the transformed mind can transform purposes and unmask secularist illusions. Fowler discusses what it takes to make professional decisions and he points the way forward towards authentic transformational practice.

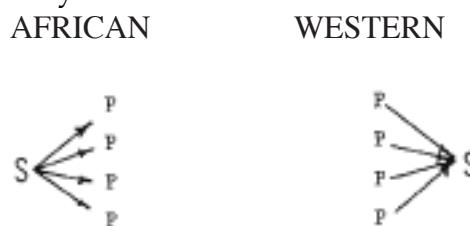
Having said this, it is crucial to note that an African world view which is not grounded in the Word of God is also limited in liberating Africa. Though we insist that we must work from an African world view to liberate our continent, that world view must be grounded and checked by scripture. In this respect, this paper rejects strongly the revival of, and current focus on, the Traditional African Religions.

Recovering the concept of pulling together

The African people have a deep sense of community which, like much of our valuable heritage, is being eroded. However, the situation is not hopeless. We can still make use of this rich heritage to recover what has been lost. The sense of oneness—‘*urumwe*,’ as Eugene Wangiri puts it—holds that the universe and all that is in it, be it animal, plant or any created thing, have an interrelation that is mutually sustaining. Nature, for example, should not be abused for the sake of human benefit. All entities in the universe depend on one another. If rain failed or if human beings cut down all trees and killed all animals, there would be disharmony, chaos and finally global extinction. Harmony is therefore life. Oneness and harmony make up ‘*urumwe*,’ which is the harmonious existence of entities whose being is based on being-together-with-others (Wangiri 1999, 72).

This sense of belonging together, is further developed by Menkiti (1970 166–167):

“When Mbiti says that the African says to himself, “I am because we are,” the we referred to here is not an additive ‘we’ but a thoroughly fused collective ‘we’. It is possible to distinguish three senses of human grouping, the first of which I shall call collectivities in the truest sense; the second of which might be called constituted human groups; and the third of which might be called random collections of individuals. The African understanding of human society adopts the usage in description number one above, whereas the Western understanding would fall closer to description number two; the difference between the two being that in what I have called ‘collectivities in the truest sense’ there is assumed to be an organic dimension to the relationship between the component individuals, whereas in the understanding of human society as something constituted what we have is a non-organic bringing together of atomic individuals into a unit more akin to an association than to a community. The difference between the two views of society is profound and can be represented diagrammatically thus:



As can be seen from the diagram, whereas the African view asserts ontological independence to human society, and moves from society to individuals, the Western view moves instead from individuals to society. In looking at the distinction just noted, it becomes quite clear why African societies tend to be organised around the requirements of duty while Western societies tend to be organised around the postulation of individual rights. In the African understanding, priority is given to the duties which individuals owe to the collectivity, and their rights, whatever these may be, are seen as secondary to their exercise of their duties. In the West, on the other hand, we find a construal of things in which certain specified rights of individuals are seen as antecedent to the organization of society; with the function of government viewed, consequently, as being the protection and defense of these individual rights.”

The African concept thus portrayed is not foreign to the scriptures but indeed totally scriptural. If this virtue is cultivated, it will ensure that we care for one another and it will be an effective way of

reducing the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor. It will also ensure that the needy—the sick, the disabled and so on—are well cared for, especially in these times when the HIV/AIDS pandemic is leaving multiple problems in its wake

“The spirit of Harambee.

In Kenya, the concept of pulling together is captured by the familiar phrase “the spirit of harambee.” The initial meaning of the phrase was to act collectively to achieve a certain communal goal. For example, in the spirit of harambee, the community would come together to plant, plough or harvest one person’s land on one day, moving to work another man’s land the next day. In the event of scarcity, when some lacked what others had, people would team up in the spirit of harambee, donating money or livestock to assist the needy. However, in recent times, harambees have become politicised and are misused in money-making schemes. They have become avenues of corruption. At harambee fundraisers, the poor watch the rich brag, and the powerful portray their might. The spirit of pulling together is totally lost. Churches have also become involved in the abuse of harambees; rather than following the biblical principles of giving towards Kingdom building, churches instead run their programs on state money given to them through harambees. This has led to poor giving habits in the church.

At least two international reports have associated harambee with corruption (East African Standard, Thursday, January 29, 2004, 6). It is because of this misuse and abuse that in April 2003, His Excellency Mwai Kibaki, the President of the Republic of Kenya, appointed a task force to re-evaluate harambees. The task force released its recommendations on January 28, 2004. The recommendations included banning pre-wedding, funeral, presidential, and even church harambees, especially where politicians are involved. The task force also recommended that harambees be permitted only at the local level, where those who contribute benefit from their money (East African Standard, Thursday, January 29, 2004, 1-3). The editorial, entitled “Check the abuses, but don’t ban kindness,” stated clearly that the value of the harambee is above question and the nobility of the spirit beyond doubt. It showed that many Kenyans who could not have afforded to go to school could do so because of harambees, and that many dispensaries, schools and public utilities have largely been funded by this collective generosity. Rather than ban harambee, this editorial makes the case that the Kenyan government must seek to help the harambee spirit reclaim its nobility.

The task force was given the challenge of establishing mechanisms for putting the practice back on a right and noble track. The term harambee has lately come under suspicion following claims from some elements in the Christian community that the term has an Asian origin in praise of Indian deities. However, whether or not we use the term, the traditional Kenyan meaning of “harambee” as the spirit of pulling together must be maintained.

Appeal to the Western community

It is God’s desire that we look at one another as brothers and sisters, recognising that in Christ we are all partakers of the divine nature. For this reason, Africa cannot boastfully claim to have all that she needs. It needs other members of the international community just as they, too, need Africans. For this reason, we appeal to the Western community to work with their African counterparts in order to fulfil the great commission in the world. In dealing with Africa, we would ask our Western brothers and sisters to:

Understand the African world view

As has been noted, any undertaking that is geared to assisting Africa should be “fried with African pots and served with African utensils,” using African resources and minds. Anything intended for the assistance of Africa should be consistent with the African world view. Unfortunately, our Western brothers and sisters have tended to ignore this, sometimes intentionally and sometimes out of ignorance. Often their assistance has not lasted, and this has resulted in a waste of God’s resources of which we all need to be good stewards.

This means that those who are not Africans, but are working with Africans and in Africa, have a four-fold responsibility: firstly, to understand the African world view; secondly, to properly establish their missions, goals and objectives; thirdly, to ensure that their goals, missions and objectives are consistent with the African world view; and fourthly, to ensure that their missions, goals and objectives

fit in God's plan of making disciples to all nations. This will ensure healthy relationships and good stewardship.

Understand that financial assistance is not the only help Africans desire

Financial assistance is just one aspect of the assistance that is needed for human development; what Africa needs is holistic development.

Support local initiatives not based on the Western world view

Ensure that you are supporting, rather than competing with, local initiatives. We have witnessed the sad situation in Africa that what should be done by locals is being done by expatriates; and even when it is done by the locals it is done in the gumboots (world view) of the West. This is not so because Africans are not competent but because (due to the faults of others) they are not trusted. Our Western brothers and sisters should learn to trust Africans. Africans, on the other hand, should not resent their Western counterparts based on the faults of those who subjected Africans to colonisation and slavery. It would be wrong for the Christian community to nurse this sense of mistrust.

On the contrary, we need above everything to emphasise the merits of Jesus Christ and, as one people, to build one another up.

It would be less costly to entrust African brothers with some of the responsibilities being handled by their Western counterparts. Let us consider, for instance, the cost of maintaining one foreign missionary compared with supporting ten or more African missionaries for the same amount of money. We do not mean that Africans do not need their Western counterparts. On the contrary, they need each other, but the work needs to be restructured. Rather than having several people from the West financially support one white person to come and work in Africa (a person who will not accomplish nearly as much as several Africans given the same support), let that one white person remain in the West and raise the funds to support several Africans to do the job in their own country. With good stewardship leading to accountability and responsibility, we can assist each other to realise and utilise our potential. Since we have God, we do not need to worry; he will smooth our path and will establish a sense of trust and decency.

We continue to applaud those from the West who are doing everything in their power to build this trust. We have known Westerners who refuse any leadership role if there is an African qualified for the job. They will not even agree to accept, let alone propose, any white person for such responsibilities. We have been encouraged by such persons because in our timidity they have helped us understand that we can do it. We even feel humbled when they agree to be "bossed over" by us.

We applaud the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education for their effort in building trust, accepting, as it were, the Centre for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education in Africa as its regional expression in Africa. It is a good situation when an institution from the West entrusts an institution run and originated by Africans to act on its behalf in Africa and is proud to call it her regional expression. Does this then contradict the theme of the paper, realising Africa's potential? Absolutely not! We are not advocating dependence on the West, but we are arguing for good stewardship and for a sense of being a brother's or sister's keeper. It is clear from the paper that each one needs the other. In fact, African and Western communities must come together if we are to liberate the world, Africa and the West included.

Something at hand: Biblical encouragement

That we have something in our hands

We should find encouragement in the call of Moses, Ex 3-4. When God called and commissioned Moses in the wilderness, Moses gave God the excuses of inadequacy, ignorance, uncertainty, lack of professional know-how and unpreparedness. When Moses was offering these excuses, he was overlooking what he already possessed—that is, personal worth, dignity and potential. God surprised him by showing him that he had enough of what God needed to use him. In response to each of the excuses, God gave answers which included: assurance of his presence and being, abundance of assistance and assurance of resources.

God was simply telling Moses that he himself was the resource that Moses needed and that on top of that he had something else at hand, a staff which God would use as a symbol of his power and pres-

ence among the people to whom God was sending him. All of Moses' fears were invalidated by God himself. An African finds himself in a similar situation. Through Moses we receive encouragement from the scriptures: we have all that God needs to liberate our continent. The feeling of inadequacy is not an invalid one and in fact is not really the problem, for it is a pathway toward realising our potential. The problem, rather, is "celebrating" this feeling of inadequacy.

That we must use what we already have

We should find encouragement from the courage of the Samaritan woman, Jn 4. Jesus confronted a Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar in Samaria with a request for a drink from the water she was drawing from the well. In view of the long standing hostility between Jews and Samaritans, and the Pharisaical rule that no Jew should drink from a cup used by a Samaritan, the woman was astonished. As Jesus conversed with her the barrier of hostility was broken down so that she ran into the village and became a blessing to her neighbours. Her message was simple: "Come see a man...could he be the Messiah?" She overcame her feeling of uselessness and moved on based on what she had gained, not scholarly professionalism but the experience of a new reality carried in ordinary language. As a result many in the city accepted Jesus, a Jew, as the Messiah they were expecting to liberate them.

Africans need to emulate this woman and overcome their feelings of uselessness, so that they can take the necessary action to liberate their continent. Boldness and courage will be needed for Africans to face their great challenges. This does not mean they have to be geniuses; it means only that they must be in touch with the real issues. This woman knew the basic need of her people—a Messiah—and using her simple village language she pointed them to the solution and so made history.

Deifying professionalism is a major handicap of the African people. It is wrongly thought that the liberation of Africa will be accomplished only when we accumulate enough PhD's. While scholarship should be highly pursued, Africans must come to recognise that God sees all his people as instruments of use. The sooner each person courageously faces his or her inadequacies, the better for Africa.

That we must place what we have in the hands of the Master

We should find encouragement from the feeding of the 5000, Lk 9:10-17. The Gospel records an account where Jesus fed 5000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. When the disciples were asked to feed the people they complained that they had nothing to feed them. Jesus was asking for what they had in hand but they complained about what they did not have. Jesus used what they had to feed the multitude. People in Africa are so busy complaining about what they do not have, that they forget that they do have something in hand that God wants to use in order to bless them.

In these three biblical examples, God is the enabler, and the person's responsibility is to recognise this and make him or herself available. In the case of Moses, God used Moses' simple staff; in the case of the Samaritan woman, he used her simple testimony; and in feeding the multitude, he used the five loaves of bread and the two fish that were available. Africa is suffering not because of scarcity but because what it has is not utilised. God is reminding us that he is ready to liberate Africa from its problems if its people will make use of what he has given them. We need to understand that the developed nations were at one time like developing nations. It has taken time for them to reach this point. If we make ourselves available for God's use, there is no doubt that where those developed nations are we shall some day be too (however not in the secularised manner). But before then, there is a responsibility on our part.

The way forward.

In summary, for us to move forward and to realise Africa's potential, the African community needs to:

1. Bridge the existing gaps in order to realise our potential.
2. Understand how to deal with the status quo.
3. Establish and promote local initiatives rather than fighting and competing with them.
4. Avoid over-dependence on the West and establish self-reliance.
5. Beware of the problem of brain drain and its causes.
6. Be good stewards of what is entrusted to us to facilitate the realisation of our potential.
7. Establish the resources at hand and utilise them.
8. Understand that we shall go nowhere without a proper grasp of our world view.

9. Recover what we have lost.
10. Ensure that the African professional community outside this continent teams up with the African professional community in Africa.
11. Do not wait till we get “enough,” because that time will never come.
12. Develop a servant leader attitude.
13. Cherish sacrificial service.

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