

Munyao, J 2021, 'What Don't You Have? The Violation of a Foundational Theological Principle in Africa's Development Practices', African Theological Journal for Church and Society, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 28-56

What Don't You Have? The Violation of a Foundational Theological Principle in Africa's Development Practices

Dr Josephine Munyao
Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya
josephinemunyao@daystar.ac.ke

Abstract

The quest for development for the African context has been largely elusive despite the application of numerous theories and strategies. Contemporary explanations do not sufficiently account for the root cause of the persistent underdevelopment. This article argues that the secular conception and approach to development defeats the process from the onset because it starts the process from the wrong question: 'What don't you have?' strengthening contextual weaknesses. It proposes that development should start from God's contextual endowment and strengths determined through the right biblical question: 'What do you have?' The purpose of this article is to challenge the sacred-secular dichotomisation that consigns development to secular public spaces while limiting theology and the church's functions around people's private and spiritual life aspects. We recommend theological participation, indeed leadership in the conception and approach to development because development is by nature theological business.

Introduction

Underdevelopment has persisted as a global challenge despite many decades of development engagement. The persistent underdevelopment of African countries has been explained through divergent positions of blaming the African context on the one hand or placing the responsibility on the developed countries on the other. But while both sides have valid arguments to a great

extent, there seems to be a foundational problem in the way development has been traditionally understood and approached that thwarts even the most genuine efforts. This article seeks to interrogate the way development has been understood and approached to determine this foundational problem and propose a strong foundation for addressing Africa's unrelenting development challenge. It begins by exploring the challenge of underdevelopment in the context and the popular explanation for it. This will be followed by an outline of how development has traditionally been understood and approached and the errors that make it elusive especially for developing countries. Then we will discuss the foundational problem that occasions the operationalisation of the wrong understanding and approach to development powered by the wrong question "What do you not have?" at the beginning of the process. Finally, the paper will propose an alternative model for Africa's development based on the primary principle of contextual endowment established by the right theological question "What do you have?" and proceed to provide scriptural bases for it. Bringing together development and theology, this paper argues that the secular approach to development violates a foundational theological principle and that factoring in the active involvement of God and His endowment of the context at the foundation of the whole enterprise can help achieve the desired developmental results. The discussion will raise examples from the Kenyan context as well as other African countries.

Africa's persistent underdevelopment and popular explanations

Numerous development theories have been formulated and applied but have failed to bring about the desired change even though every successive theory promises to deliver results better than its predecessor. Leys surveys the emergence and successive failure of major development theories from the 1950s to the 90s, namely, the economic, modernisation, dependency, Marxist, and neo-liberal theories finding them too generalised to address diverse contextual realities in the countries being developed (1996:9). The alternative development approaches that included community development theory sought to focus on specific regions with the local contexts' participation promising better results in developmental engagement (Martin and Mathema 2010; Mulwa 2008). Despite the great promises, the newer approaches have not necessarily guaranteed desired change as they have even, at times,

aggravated the problem. For instance, Martin and Mathema (2010:22) observe that the persistent problem of underdevelopment in the informal settlements in Kenya despite heavy Non-Government Organisations involvement is caused by agents who do not desire positive change lest they lose the benefits they reap from the persistent underdevelopment.

In the course of the quest for development globally, it has been realised that developed countries continue to prosper while the developing countries deteriorate; and that the gap between the two is continually increasing. This scenario has led to the conclusion that developed countries are responsible for the deterioration of poor countries. Some have pointed out that the genesis of the problem was occasioned by the historical forces of the slave trade, trade relations, colonialism and neo-colonialism that created inequality long before the world began to be globally concerned with development (Chege and Sifuna 2006; Katongole 2005; Mushanga 2011; Rodney 2018). Indeed, Rodney (2018:12), in what could be stated as a matter of rule in international relations, correctly observes:

When two societies of different sorts come into prolonged and effective contact ... the weaker of the two societies (i.e., the one with less economic capacity) is bound to be adversely affected – and the bigger the gap between the two societies concerned the more detrimental are the consequences.

These voices have indicated for Africa and other developing contexts, and not without grounds, that as long as these countries keep depending on the developed countries for capital, technology, loans and other resources, they will never truly develop. Recommending the example of Japan for breaking this dependency, Kinoti advises African countries “that import substitution and technological assistance programs lead ... to greater dependence ... to more debt and to more poverty” (1997:175-176). This wisdom needs to be borne in the mind of individuals and agencies seeking to develop poor nations.

But in all fairness, the underdevelopment of Africa and other contexts is not entirely caused by developed countries. Africa has her fair share of the responsibility. For a long time, countries have been trying to deal with poverty, diseases, illiteracy, retrogressive cultural practices and political instability

among other problematic developmental challenges. Internal vices such as negative ethnicity and corruption are perhaps the biggest challenges crippling their efforts. Parker and Rathbone (2007:47) correctly observe that ethnicity, being a key identity marker among African people has been appropriated “especially for politicians” as “a tool used for the accumulation of power.” Defensive voices such as Nangoli (2008:9) however argue that negative ethnicity was instituted in Africa by former colonial masters. But then, Githu Muigai, a former Attorney General gives the correct perspective concerning how these ethnic lines were never perceived as a problem after independence but rather as an opportunity to be exploited. Citing the case of the founding president of Kenya, he observes that ethnicity was meticulously appropriated “as the dominant basis of political mobilization” in the quest for power and wealth (2004:215). In fact, negative ethnicity has been a major challenge in Kenya to date. The eruption of post-election violence in 2007-8 was ethnically instigated and took the economy back from the highest GDP of 7.0 in the entire decade, achieved in five years of continuous rising trajectory and hard work, to a low of 1.6 (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis 2010:2). Evidently, the challenge of negative ethnicity persistent in developing countries is a major challenge to development.

Corruption, a twin challenge to negative ethnicity, has also negatively affected development efforts in many African countries. While acknowledging the fact that all countries struggle with corruption to some degree, countries in Africa over the years generally perform extremely poorly. In 2015, Botswana and Rwanda were ranked among the best performers. Botswana was in position 28 with a score of 63% while Rwanda was in position 44 with 54%. Namibia and Ghana were in position 45 and 56 respectively. Nigeria came way below in position 136 with 26% of cleanness as Kenya followed closely at position 139 with a score of 25% (Transparency International 2015). The trend is fairly similar in the 2018 index. Botswana scored 61% in position 34; Rwanda 56% in position 48; and Namibia 53% in position 52. Ghana seems to have slipped back to score 41% in position 78 while Nigeria and Kenya deteriorated both competing for position 144 with a tied score of 27% (Transparency International 2018).

High corruption levels in a country would definitely create a hostile environment for its development and vice versa. It is no wonder that Botswana

has been one of the African countries with remarkable growth comparable to the phenomenon experienced in the East Asian economies in the 1990s (World Bank 1993:1). Rwanda also is one of the few African countries scoring highly in the achievement of Millennium Development Goals concluded in 2015, and currently reported to be making visible strides in economic and human development (UNESCO 2017). Much as there is celebration for these two African nations, the question remains, but beyond the scope of this paper, whether or not the notable development reported is experienced by the majority of the population or by only a few. This is because at times indicators of economic development may be very high while the largest populations wallow in abject poverty. For instance, Dube (2002:62) raises legitimate concern why independent Botswana's leadership seeks foreign companies from all over the world arguing that they create jobs for the locals while in the real sense they entrench "increasing' problems of poverty, unemployment, social inclusion, and other forms of marginalization". The absence or low levels of corruption encourage development and vice versa.

While the ranking and scores of Transparency International are always disputed by countries that find themselves presented in a negative light, there seems to be justification for looking at Kenya more closely. Institutions ranked highly in corruption prevalence over the years in the country include the police, political parties, parliament and the judiciary, all critical organs in the maintenance of law and order, a precondition for development (U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre 2012). Report after report reiterates that in the actual governance, the various regimes leave trails of major economic scandals and gross malpractices as demonstrated by various government and non-government reports on Kenya (Human Rights Watch 2002; Government of the Republic of Kenya 2004; Kenya Commission of Human Rights; Kenya Land Alliance 2006). Other corruption scandals featured in the public domain yet to be addressed include Anglo-leasing, Goldenberg, the National Youth Service, the Kenya Electoral and Boundaries Commission, the National Cereals and Produce Board, the Aror and Kimwarer water projects, and Kenya Medical Supplies Authority's COVID-19 management and financial scandals.

Clearly, developed nations genuinely involved in the development of Kenya and other countries are justified to blame the countries themselves for the frustration of development efforts. Equally, the developing countries sincerely

concerned about their own situations and working hard to remove all hindrances would also justifiably blame their developed partners for their plight. Both sides of the argument have valid arguments calling for serious attention if development will be realised. African countries have to deal with the rampant corruption, negative ethnicity, and the rest of the impediments to create favourable socio-economic and political environments. They certainly have to think deeply and act decisively on their unequal relationship with the developed world and its effects. But since these truths have been in the public for a while now, this knowledge should have begun to help the nations make decisions yielding positive results by now which is hardly the case. There seems to be an underlying reason why development for most countries in Africa has generally been very slow or totally elusive. To correctly determine the cause of lack of meaningful development, it is important to first check the foundation upon which development is built by examining how development is currently understood and approached and how subtle misconceptions are entrenched.

Traditional conception and approach to development and inherent errors

Since the 1980s, when this author was a high school and university student of Economics, development was tied to production which was constructed around land, labour, capital, and entrepreneurship as factors of production as well as the environment in which they are worked out. Developed countries have always been known to have the right conditions that favour development while underdeveloped ones do not. The laws of demand and supply that appeared to be cast in stone explained why the west was doing better in the world market compared to developing countries, as the latter largely depended on agricultural goods that always flooded the world markets resulting in low prices. At the same time, the constant or rising demand for machinery and advanced technology was always attracting competitive prices. This narrative based on theoretical economic principles formed the understanding that African countries were the epitome of underdevelopment as European countries and the United States were the archetype of development.

The paradigms that made a great impact on economic thinking were constructed around the classical theories. Rostow (1960) socialised Economics students in the 1970s and 80s in proposing stages of development, beginning with *traditional societies*; followed by *preconditions for take-off*; then the *take-off stage*; followed by the *drive to maturity*; and ending with *the age of mass consumption*. As a result, the first misconception was engraved. Development was conceptualised as the access to unlimited consumption rather than the engagement in undeterred production. As Hout (2019:3) correctly points out, there is the inculcation of “an emphasis on consumption rather than production”. Consequently, the value for purchasing power for the young countries is pegged, not on what people can produce and sell or export to other countries but on what they can buy or import from the rest of the world.

Closely tied to the erroneous conception of development in terms of consumption is the second error formed in the young minds, who are currently the drivers of economies in developing countries now around their 50s or 60s. They were cultured to believe that ultimately the goal of development was for developing countries to be formed in the likeness and image of developed countries, especially in the expansion of industrialisation, modernisation, and ability to acquire desired goods and services. This culture becomes problematic and grossly misleading for poor countries. Unfortunately, this understanding is still the operating paradigm in most developing countries. After almost 60 years since Rostow’s theory was developed, Kenya’s Parliament Budget report of 2019 still uses the model colourfully illustrated on the title page with the question, “Ready for take-off?” in the assessment of the country’s development index. The report laments that the country is just entering the pre-conditions for take-off, with its biggest challenge being that “the invisible hand of cartels that interferes with market forces and distorts supply, ultimately pushing prices upwards and some producers out of the market” (Government of the Republic of Kenya 2019:iii).

It is development understood in spending categories that compels countries like Kenya to, for example, hire companies from the West, and now also the East to bring in their expertise, superior capital and technological power to construct roads and standard gauge railway lines through “increasing government spending on expansion, and *modernization* of our railways, roads, ports, airports, energy, water and the ICT and telecommunications

infrastructure” (Government of the Republic of Kenya 2013:ii). At the time of writing this paragraph it was exposed that the country faced a debt crisis to the level that it risked the loss of both its most strategic Kenya Ports Authority assets and the Mombasa port. These assets were used as collateral in the 2013 loan of about Ksh. 500 billion from a Chinese Bank for the construction of the Standard Gauge railway line running across the country from Mombasa to the Uganda border (Hellenic Shipping News 2019). The government Auditor General referred to the deal as “a lopsided loan agreement” at the expense of Kenya’s economy (National Sportslink 2019). Solomon (2019) refers to the Chinese government approach as “debt-trap diplomacy” in her operation with developing countries and Henry quoted the New York Times’s description of China’s approach as “ambitious use of loans and aid to gain influence around the world – and of its willingness to play hardball to collect” (Henry 2018). The pressure to be like the United States of America, China, and the rest of the developed world pushes the country deeper and deeper into debt in total disregard of all caution or warnings (ICPAK 2018). Questionable is whether the construction of the standard gauge railway line through foreign financing was not a priority for Kenya at the time. Consequent to the operation of the railway line, jobs have been lost from many fronts as trucks on the Nairobi-Mombasa highway have been minimised. Many of the towns and businesses along the highway have closed down. Crowning this loss, there is a minimal positive benefit to the common person, even though we have a transport network close to what China has.

Individual lifestyles seem to be following the same consumer pattern as in most African countries. For most people in Kenya, for instance, driving a car is evidence of development. The country imports cars and then purchases petroleum products to run them from foreign countries. There also seems to be a craving for prestigious guzzlers purchased through huge loans which are serviced over long periods, not only further providing a market for European countries but also crippling local capacities to innovation and investment both directly and indirectly. The most-watched movies are produced from abroad modelling for the present and the next generation cultural values far removed from the local context.

Thirdly, the traditional understanding of development arranged countries in a continuum labelling some as least developed on the one hand and others

‘developed’ on the other with the rest falling in between as ‘developing’ countries, and explained the process as a linear progression with a destination. The classification is grossly misleading in that developed countries are imagined to have reached the final destination and only engaging in the process for the sake of other countries. It has also been observed that the continuum of countries is misleading because some countries originally designated as developing have shifted positions, and the global relationships established in the 1950s and 60s based on donor-recipient dynamics have also changed (Harris, Moore, and Schmitz 2009:7). The truth of the matter is that all countries are essentially ‘developing countries’ including the developed ones. Not one country can claim to be developed enough to be in no need of any more of it.

The fourth distortion entrenches inequality. Empowered by the development destination concept above, developed countries legitimize their position as the ‘masters’, ‘owners’, and ‘drivers’ of development, affording them the right to act as referees of the process in which they are also players. There lacks a neutral, fair and authoritative umpire in charge of the development game to ensure it is played justly according to some rules. For instance, what or who regulates China’s historical exploitative approach while relating with less-developed countries as observed above? While some limited rules and regulations may be put in place to control the overt structures, no human standards can be developed to check the desire to maximize profits at the expense of the weak partner at personal, national, international and global levels. And since it is virtually impossible for the referee to fairly officiate a high-stakes game in which he or she is also a player, it is thus not difficult to understand why development founded on the supremacy of some countries as the reference point against which all other regions measure themselves is elusive (Mehmet 2002).

Lastly, the entrenchment of inequality finally legitimizes a wrong design for development engagement. Development is deliberately designed to start with the wrong question: *What do you not have?* While this is a logical starting point for the more privileged partner due to the international trade angle to development discussed above, it is to the disadvantage of poor countries. This is because the question begins the process of development from a point of weakness rather than strength for the countries. Since no country can be

developed from its weaknesses, this approach only makes the countries weaker in the long run. It ignores local resources and the potential of the contexts being developed, no matter how few or negligible they are. Instead, power is relinquished to the developed world for the transformation of the local contexts. On deeper examination, the model employed in the development for poor countries appears to be a sanitised side of international trade. Onuoha and Qobo (2012:5-6) correctly state an economic fact that developing and developed countries do not have common interests, concerns or felt needs when it comes to the dynamics of the international playground. The reality of gestalt images to both developed and developing countries looking at the same picture called development, but seeing totally different things and outcomes seems to reduce the chances of the weaker partners to ever realize the picture of their pursuit. This is because they hardly see the other picture of trade and business being appropriated by their partners. It is not clear what checks or measures development partners employ to ensure the absence of exploitation of the lesser partners knowing well that what the disadvantaged partners need is what the developed partners badly want to sell in a capitalistic market that seeks to maximize profits and reduce costs as much as possible. As noted above, dependence on other countries for capital, aid, technology, and manpower eventually leads to more poverty and dependency.

The traditional conception and approach to development inculcated at the introductory levels of development thinking are erroneous and grossly limiting for Africa and other developing countries. The disposition to spend as evidence of development, to feel perpetually underdeveloped in comparison to the rest of the world, and to depend on more developed partners for their prosperity are programmed to thwart efforts to meaningfully transform the continent. It is no wonder that despite many decades of global engagement there are widening gaps between developed countries and their developing counterparts. Before we propose a favourable understanding of development, we need to underscore the foundational factor that occasions, sanctions and powers the misconception of, and erroneous approach to development.

The foundational problem and the wrong question

The foundational problem that occasions the gaps described above rotates around the paradigm employed in the understanding and approach to

development. Covey (2004:23-24) offers invaluable insights on the importance of using a correct roadmap. Explaining the futility of finding one's directions to a destination using an incorrect map and comparing this to the pursuit of development with a wrong paradigm, he correctly observes:

You might work on your *behavior* – you could try harder, be more diligent, double your speed. But your efforts would only succeed in getting you to the wrong place faster ... The fundamental problem has nothing to do with behavior or your attitude. It has everything to do with having the wrong map.

In this case, challenging developing countries to deal with their moral issues and other challenges is good. Similarly, encouraging the developed world to address the inequality and exploitation in international relationships around development and international trade is good. And we must do these things. But because the paradigmatic template in use is a faulty one, good as these challenges are, the desired goals will not be achieved.

The foundational problem rotates around the inculcation of a purely secular vision to an enterprise in which divinity is so much invested, and especially for a context in which a religious worldview reigns. Simply stated, God, religious and theological dimensions are not anywhere in the current approach to development. Since the enlightenment, long before development was formed as a discipline, human preoccupation has rotated around “how the modern, scientific, and democratic mind can best intervene to improve human existence” (Peet and Hartwick 2015:3). Before this period, the general worldview acknowledged the Biblical and theological teachings around the sovereignty of God, the authority of Scripture, the total depravity of humanity, and their need for God's intervention (Grenz and Olson 1992:104; Lane 2006:234). After the enlightenment, however, the truth was driven by humanity's resolve to separate all forms of scholarship from matters of religion and theology ceased from being the superior team-leader on whom the rest of the sciences depended, and to whom they should align as the chief (Aquinas 1485:1.1.5).

While the enlightenment and its effects have prevailed for many centuries in the West, most of the developing contexts lived and functioned without this

secularization baptism. African communities, for instance, have always lived with a consciousness of the presence of God, or gods, and His active involvement in all the affairs of humanity and creation. This religious and spiritual worldview brings both physical and spiritual aspects of creation together in a complex operational interdependence where humans are part of that whole rather than its master (Mbiti 1975; Turaki 2006). Effectively, the nature of the challenges faced as well as the solution to them must also be connected to this worldview that pervades all aspects of human life whether socio-economic, cultural, political or spiritual. Thus, development, especially for Africa, cannot be approached as a purely secular enterprise. Deneulin and Bano (2009) studied the relationship between religion and development reaching the correct conclusion that the two cannot be separated. Effectively, at least for the African context, development has to eventually be aligned to the people's foundational beliefs. In fact, it has been established that among the factors that boosted development in Europe faster than other parts of the world was the Christian protestant faith that shaped a development-conscious worldview for individual persons that prioritised hard work among other virtues (Peet and Hartwick 2015:151-152).

Unfortunately, any scholarship worth its name today introducing spiritual, religious or theological dimensions into the academic and public conversation is treated with suspicion. As Marsden pointed out, the academy finds the incorporation of the existence of God and His involvement in the natural world issues outrageous (1997:13-24). The position that faith is supposed to be relegated to the private realm, not the public sphere of academic scholarship or the round tables of reflection on development, should be found foreign thinking in the African understanding of the world, its elements and their relationships. This foreign imagination that separates sacred and secular life aspects also, now, unfortunately, consigns the church to a preoccupation with spiritual matters pertaining to salvation from sin, qualifications for eternal life and a right relationship with God while expecting secular leadership to mind the physical, socio-economic and political wellbeing of the people (Gifford 2008). Matters to do with the alleviation of suffering in society are hardly placed anywhere near the centre of focus in many churches' practical approach to the gospel. Even faith-based development agencies have been prohibited to integrate their theological perspectives with development mission. Perhaps the greatest challenge of Christian approaches to

development rests in the accusation of engineering conversion of people in pluralistic contexts forbidden by the 2012 ACFID Code of Conduct (Enright and Ware 2012:100). The norm has been to employ a purely secular approach to perceived secular issues and challenges while requiring the church to deal with faith issues privately.

As a result, the Church, and her theology in Africa, do not take their rightful position to lead or guide society in the circumstances it finds itself. Yet, the solution to societal challenges has to be theologically or spiritually determined. Myers (2011:86, 90) states a fundamental theological principle in understanding and dealing with underdevelopment: “The nature of poverty is fundamentally relational ... The cause of poverty is fundamentally spiritual.” This summarizes the causes of poverty to two aspects – human relationships and the fallenness of humanity. Since the church deals with these two aspects, it cannot be uninvolved when it comes to the diagnosis of the root problem that breeds self-centeredness and greed, or laziness and corruption in the failure of development efforts. Groody offers correct insight on the root cause of exploitation at the international level. While acknowledging that “global inequalities of today are rooted in structural injustices in society”, he advises that “on a deeper level they are also integrally related to the disorders of the human heart” (2007:10). The church, and Christian theology, are best suited for this diagnosis and cure of these disorders given the power of the gospel message founded on God’s righteousness and justice.

But then rather than strategically planning for and leading the world in its development, the church trails behind the world responding and reflecting on its effects on the people. Oduyoye (2004:99) correctly describes this unfortunate state and posture of the church in Africa:

The churches often wait for political crises to make statements, civil wars to work on reconciliation, natural disasters to provide humanitarian aid. The church in Africa tends to be a ‘rear action’ church, rarely visible on the front lines, and often delayed in arriving on the scene afterwards to pick up the pieces. In terms of being with people in crises, the church in Africa, with the significant exception of some clergy and lay leaders, has usually stood aloof and remained mute.

Theology has a lot to say about development. A proactive approach needs to be taken by the church and theology to help society wrestle with underdevelopment among other societal challenges. It will be helpful to understand development from a theological point of view as a process intended, initiated, and guided by God – theological business through and through. It started beyond humanity and their time. Men and women must humbly accept that they begin with things that they did not bring to the table in the first place. Throughout history, discovery, invention, scholarship and innovation are God’s intended activities for humans using their God-given skills and creative abilities to make their lives better. In their experience of God’s creation, humanity is exposed to the potential and productivity of the rest of creation that includes the earth, plants, animals, the atmosphere, and the water masses just to name a few. The observation and study of wind, water, air, minerals, and rain led to the generation of electric, solar, hydro, geothermal, or chemical energy guided by the natural in place from the beginning. It is therefore a faulty approach that starts the process of development from any context by asking “What don’t you have?”

The foundational problem is that while development is profoundly theological business, the paradigm within which it is worked out is purely secular. This does not mean that secular proposals cannot be applied in the African context with positive solutions. What it means rather is that these proposals need to be eventually aligned to theological truths that people in the particular context live by and uphold. For instance, Sen (1999), like the United Nations, approaches development as the expansion of freedom, personal choices, and human rights. Indeed, these are expected to have a great impact in the African context where there is much marginalisation, discrimination and abuse. However, in the African cultural and Christian context, the unlimited notion of individual personal freedom to do whatever one chooses hardly applies because, as Myers (2011:30) correctly points out, one may even choose “to give up some of our freedom because we can better love God and our neighbour when we do.” Thus, being deeply theological, development needs to be defined and approached through foundational theological principles, not through purely secular models.

Without a correct paradigm, development is reduced to international trade and business enterprise. Developing countries will continue to be frustrated

that the more they get involved the less developed they get. Arguments will continue to be engaged, whether underdevelopment is caused by developed or developing countries without the courage to examine the map used to help people arrive home. With the right conceptualising of development in theological terms, a theological approach with the right question would be applied with the promise to deliver better and surer results than any secular models. Such a model, unlike the secular approaches discussed, must be theological and must begin with the right question.

An alternative theological model with the right question

As discussed above, the erroneous approach to development rises from a faulty understanding or conception of what development is. A theological perspective must first define development theologically. A possible theological definition of development must factor in at least three central truths. First of all, development has to be conceptualised as the process of pursuing desired transformation and improvement of life and the creation of relationships. Secondly, it pertains to humanity as responsible and accountable stewards utilising, enhancing and protecting God-given material and immaterial resources available in their context. Thirdly, it has to be measured by the well-being of all, and the degree of justice and righteousness in social-economic, political, environmental, and cultural relationships. Unfortunately, this is far from what development is understood to be in contemporary society.

A correct perspective to development that works for Africa therefore must take into consideration several factors. Firstly, it must have, or strongly imply, the presence and active involvement of God who is in charge of the work as part and parcel of his mission in the world. It must acknowledge that He has supplied the natural, human, environmental, technical, scientific, and philosophical resources necessary for development. Secondly, humanity's role in the work should be that of a steward privileged to participate in the *Missio Dei* as one whose life finds fulfilment in God's purposes for the created order and its relationships (Groody 2007:23-24). Development work, on the part of humanity, involves the activity of discovering, studying and cultivating creation to make it fruitful as expressed in Genesis 2:15. Consequently, the privileged few, whether in terms of education, wealth or positions at micro or macro levels of development, or even in the so-called stages of development, ought

not to see their advantage as a license to exploit others but as a privilege to serve them and a higher purpose too. Thirdly, the evaluation of the success of various development projects by the various agencies, whether the local government or the World Bank, should not just be measured by quantitative indices in the socio-economic or political lives of the people. It must be measured against a higher standard of justice and righteousness at the point of conduct, attitude, motives and character of all stakeholders involved in the process, and its positive impact on people and their relationships. This is because, as already established, developmental approaches with moral imperatives, yield better fruits than those without (Ajulu 2001:14).

This theological approach acknowledges that God has laid down the foundation and potential for development in every context according to His wisdom and purposes and that development has to begin with what people have in their context but never with what they do not have. So, rather than asking, “*What don’t you have*”, the correct question to ask is: “*What do you have?*” Ironically, both the West and the East apply the correct question for their context by always beginning with what they have. But when they come to the developing world, they begin with the wrong question to create a market for that which they have. God has already endowed Africa and other developing contexts with resources from which to begin and drive their development. Mlay (1997:147) summarises the diverse wealth of the African context that includes “resources of land, forests, water, minerals, oil and gas”, lamenting that “its people are underutilised and its cultural wealth unexploited.” Instead of development being built on these strengths and potential areas, unfortunately, it has been worked out from the points of technological weaknesses and capital inadequacies.

More often than not, the strengths of developing contexts are winked at or quickly passed as weaknesses. Two examples will suffice to qualify this point. While Africa is endowed with 25% of the world’s arable land, its share of production from this endowment potential to the world market is not 25%. Its contribution comprises only about 10%, constantly importing food and other products from other continents thereby keeping the agricultural sector completely underdeveloped (Kariuki 2011:3). The wealth and potential of land are hardly appreciated. Taking Kenya as an example, most of her Eastern region’s land is categorised as arid and semi-arid and therefore dismissed from

any meaningful agricultural use. But whenever these regions have their chance to receive adequate rains, they have bountiful harvests, as the soils are extremely fertile. There is little thinking on harnessing this God-given resource to ensure that this land has reliable sources of water for meaningful agriculture that leads to sustainable food security. The government's megaprojects are designed towards constructing huge and expensive water reservoirs that hardly mature due to the corruption challenges discussed above. Poverty is deliberately exploited by a political leadership over the years which glories in the provision of relief food whenever there is famine and drought, as a means of winning votes from the poor masses.

But this is not just a local leadership problem. Leaders of development internationally do not seem to realise the serious implications of hunger, despite reports and statistics indicating that hunger is a major challenge for development. The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report indicates that there are rising trends of undernourishment in the world where Africa leads the list with a prevalence of 19.9% followed by Latin America with 14.4% (2019:8). Similarly, the World Health Organization (2019:5) reports that about 33% of deaths in poor countries occur to children below the age of 5 years and that the majority of them are caused by "communicable, perinatal and nutritional conditions." It is for this reason that Save the Children (2012:1) laments:

As world leaders have been occupied with one economic crisis after another, a hunger and malnutrition crisis affecting millions of children has gone unchecked. While the world has been experiencing years of financial turmoil, pervasive long-term malnutrition is slowly eroding the foundations of the global economy by destroying the potential of millions of children.

Sincere efforts for laying the foundation for development require that developing countries focus first on food security to ensure that their populations' first basic needs are met. Instead, projects target an expanding middle class whose needs, mindset and priorities synchronise with the economic and technological needs of the rich nations. It is, for instance, the middle class that needs cars, roads, standard gauge railways, fast foods and business deals that provide money for the sustenance of personal power. It is

beyond this paper to discuss the business ethics of multinational companies allowed to operate in Kenya. It suffices, however, to point out that there is an outcry about their practices of channelling their industrial wastes into the few rivers available, rendering the resource poisonous and unfit for human consumption or food production. This would never happen in developed countries. In effect, the rich soils unadulterated with artificial fertilizers; the clean run-off water from the rain; the equatorial climate; and the ability for everyone to grow food for consumption and sale are ignored so that a firm foundation for true development remains untenable.

The second example pertains to Africa's population endowment that has always been a blessing but has instead been construed as a curse and a hindrance to development. Following the insights of the classical Malthusian population theory entrenched in early nurseries of Economics classes highlighted above, it is still assumed that "the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce sustenance for man" (Malthus 1798:10-11). But this is only one side of the coin. Mlay observes that, with a population of over 600 million in 1992 forming 10% of the population of the world, Africa was generally sparsely populated except for some regions and cities which were overpopulated. He further points out that after independence, most of the nations "felt that there was a need to encourage the growth of their national populations to tap perceived vast natural resources, especially land" (1997:130). As a matter of fact, the whole idea of the transatlantic slave trade was to raise a productive population for the West as a factor of production. Even when young and strong men especially were not shipped to the West, they were utilised in foreign plantations in their own countries as a cheap labour force for colonialists, as historians have pointed out (Sifuna 1980).

The positive relationship between population and development is always ignored despite its reality in history. As Rodney (2018:110) explains,

Population growth played a major role in European development in providing labor, markets, and the pressures which led to further advance. Japanese population growth had similar positive effects; and in other parts of Asia which remained pre-capitalist, the size of population led to a much more intensive exploitation

of the land than has ever been the case in what is still a sparsely peopled African continent.

The point is, a high population is more often than not a prerequisite for development. Nevertheless, the 1980s and 90s were perhaps the peak decades campaigning fiercely for cutting down of populations for developing countries at both national and international levels to encourage development, even though vast lands of the various countries were, and still are, uninhabited. Meanwhile, and unfortunately, there is runaway unemployment in such an endowed continent, because this precious endowment has yet to be fully appreciated and appropriated in working the land. The continent is moved from its strengths and directed to concentrate on its weaknesses that only guarantees dependency on more developed nations for capital, technological, and financial resources. Financial aid, on which African countries depended for a long time, has been described as

... the silent killer of growth” whose application “chokes off desperately needed investment, instils a culture of dependency, and facilitates rampant and systematic corruption, all with deleterious consequences for growth (Moyo 2009:48-49).

The point I am making is that Africa’s abundant endowment of land and large population always looked at as hindrances of development by local and international development agents are the very strengths upon which meaningful development could, and should be constructed. Someone may argue that a lot of these resources are not useful because of a lack of reliable rainfall. However, reliable rainfall comes in once in a while. In any case, even when the rains are inadequate to sustain crops to harvest, the water from these unreliable rains is allowed to run off freely into the rivers and eventually into the Indian Ocean causing soil erosion on its way – a resource that could be harvested and used for irrigation until the crops reach maturity. The badly sloped and gullied lands in some places are not a hindrance. They should be looked at as resources to facilitate natural water harvesting. The mindset is key here. It calls for the ability to see possibilities even in the face of hindrances. The Endower of contexts considers it necessary that poor countries focus on what they have rather than what they do not have to begin their development. The Bible has many instances to illustrate this principle.

Biblical examples with the question “What do you have?”

The approach that seeks to transform people and their contexts by first establishing what exists in the context is the most foundational principle of development put in place by the Creator of the universe. Indeed, the Bible rings with repeated incidences of God enquiring what his people have whenever He sought to bring about change and transformation in their lives and situations. Hardly did He use what they did not have. Numerous examples are available from the Bible. For instance, Peter and John in Acts of the Apostles chapter 3 did not have silver or gold to give to the crippled beggar as it was required of them by the law that encouraged the giving of alms to the poor. But they had a Name and that was all that was needed to permanently and irreversibly transform the entire life and condition of the beggar. Even if the two apostles had borrowed money to give to the beggar, they could have fulfilled an expectation of righteousness, but his condition would not have been meaningfully changed. His need went beyond basic needs or economic empowerment. He needed to be whole. Financial aid or alms, just as it could not help the beggar, cannot lift begging nations out of the shackles of poverty.

A second example pertains to the invalid healed by Jesus at the pool of Bethesda after 38 years of his life in John chapter 5. When asked by Jesus if he wanted to get well, he kept lamenting how he did not have *a man* to help him jump into the waters whenever the angel stirred the pool. But then he had One man standing before him, the One who was sending the angel to work out the miracle with whom there would be no need for waiting for the next time the angel would come, or for a helper to get him into the water for healing. This man standing before him made a permanent difference in his life to the extent that the one who needed to be carried around by helpers was able to walk around by himself and even carry his own bed.

A third example concerns Moses in Exodus chapter 14. When they were blocked by the sea in front and the enemies were closing in on them fast, God used what Moses had in his hand. In verse 16, God instructed him to stretch his rod over the sea. On doing this, a way was made in the sea and Israel was saved from imminent extinction in the hands of the Egyptians. When the Egyptians attempted to follow Israel into the sea, they all perished as the water covered them.

A fourth example concerns a widow in 1 Kings chapter 17 who did not have much flour to knead bread to give to Elijah the prophet as he had asked during the great drought. She explained that she had a little flour and little oil to cook one last meal for her and her son only and then they had to wait for death. God used the negligible offering she had to first serve His prophet according to His instruction and He then ensured a constant supply of food throughout the famine for her and her son.

A fifth example is about the widow in 2 Kings chapter 4. She was poor and heavily in debt. Her debtors threatened to throw her children into slavery until the debts were settled. Elisha asked her what she had in the house. It turned out she only had a jar of oil. The prophet instructed her to borrow as many vessels as possible and pour oil from the jar into them. All the vessels were filled with oil that could be sold to pay her debts, while she could live on the remainder, leading to her social, economic and political turn-around.

The disciples of Jesus in John chapter 6 serve as a sixth example. They did not have any food for themselves, neither could they afford to buy enough of it to offer the hungry crowds that had followed Jesus and listened to His teachings. But they had among them a boy with five loaves of bread and 2 fish which, according to their confession, were negligible in the face of the need before them. But Jesus used these to feed over 5000 people with left-overs that filled 12 baskets. Examples upon examples can be drawn from Scripture witnessing to God's pattern of using the little people had, rather than what they did not have, to miraculously make a permanent and irreversible difference in their lives. From these examples, it is evident that it did not matter how negligible the resources were.

Notably, in every account, there was something available to be used for the miracle to take place. These negligible resources were all that was needed to be magnified once offered to God in obedience and used in line with His guidelines and instructions. While these episodes were miracles from a human perspective, to God they were His ordinary way of operation. What is demonstrated by these Scriptural examples about persons is also true for communities, societies and nations. It follows then that Africa's development needs to be worked out from contextual resources supplied by God no matter how negligible they appear to be and that they need to be utilised in ways in

line with His will and purposes. It requires that humanity relinquishes the self-entitlement as the master of the universe to God. Then development in Africa will come about as a miracle because God is at work. This is because the right theological question is always, “What do you have?”

And Africa has a lot more on top of a large supply of labour force and vast lands with the best arable soils in the world. Africa has young people and children forming the greatest part of its population; an excellent equatorial climate with natural solar light and energy; beautiful panorama and tourist attraction sites; diverse species of wildlife and excellent conservation reserves; naturally grown foodstuffs; excellent coastal beaches; great institutions of learning from where appropriate contextual development should be invented; and the list is endless. Most important, Africa has a rich spiritual heritage with deep faith in God and His involvement in their context. Development should therefore be based on these tangible and non-tangible resources.

Conclusion

International relationships and local conditions indeed have a direct bearing on development or lack of it. They are however not the primary causes of resistant underdevelopment. This article has demonstrated that the foundational problem lies in the understanding of what “development” is and how it is approached in the limiting secular vision within which it has been operated. Development itself has been identified as an enterprise in which divinity is intrinsically involved from the beginning. Consequently, operationalising it in a dualistic matrix that demands the separation of sacred from secular, church from state, physical from spiritual, and theology from development, will continue to produce mixed results at best. A foundational theological model that seeks to begin the process by establishing contextual endowments first and the active presence of God forms a firm foundation upon which development should be built because it works with higher ethical and moral standards for the true prosperity of poor countries. It dispels self-centeredness calling for justice and righteousness that prohibits exploitation of the less privileged and upholds genuine concern for others expressed in the principles of justice, integrity, and equity.

The theological model for development first calls upon the world and agents of development to recognise the limitation of the purely secular matrices employed in addressing human challenges and problems. Secondly, it calls upon stakeholders to consider that the model discarded many centuries ago and marginalised in scholarship and public policy formulation circles today, might provide the turnaround for frustrated and sincere development agents. Thirdly, it is a call to recognise that even if world systems reject the role of faith in seeing human problems and their solutions, the strategies worked out must be in keeping with the principles that govern the functioning and relationships of the universe as established from the beginning. In other words, even if the world does not acknowledge that God created the world, it cannot run away from the imperative to conform to the natural endowment principle for contextual development.

The church and her theology need to rise above a preoccupation of the salvation of souls with little relevance to the plight of humanity in the world. It requires the church to embrace the fact that God is concerned about the suffering of His people and also at work in alleviating their challenges as clearly demonstrated in Scripture. It needs to be realised that to the degree that the church embraces the separation from the world through dualistic arrangements, to that same degree does she dislocate herself from the instrumental role that God desires to work out through her to bring about shalom-peace to His people in the here and now. As long as theology is quiet in Africa, and as long as it lags behind development, politics, policy generation, finance, and governance, there will be no promise for true alleviation of the challenges of underdevelopment facing Africa. This is because theology and development are not merely inseparable: they are profoundly and theologically integrated.

Bibliography

Ajulu, D. 2001. *Holism in Development: An African Perspective on Empowering Communities*. California: World Vision International.

Aquinas, T. 1485. "Summa Theologica, Question No. 5."

Chege, F. and D. Sifuna. 2006. *Girls' and women's education in Kenya: Gender perspectives and trends*. UNESCO.

Covey, S. 2004. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful lessons in personal change*. London: Pocket Books.

Deneuline, S. and M. Bano. 2009. *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script*. London: Sed Books Ltd.

Dube, M. W. 2002. "Rereading the Bible: Biblical Hermeneutics and Social Justice." Pp. 57 – 68 in *Africa Theology Today Vol 1*, edited by Emmanuel Katongole. Scranton: The University of Scranton Press.

Enright, K. and V. Ware 2012. "Uniting World: Partnership for Effective Involvement in Mission Including Development." Pp. 167-188 in *Mission and Development: God's work or Good Works?*, edited by Matthew Clarke. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Food and Agriculture Organization. 2019. "The state of Food Security and Nutrition in the World." Retrieved October 1, 2019 (<http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf>).

Gifford, P. 2008. "Inculturation Theology: Observations of an Outsider." *Hekima Review* (No. 38):18-34.

Government of the Republic of Kenya. 2004. "The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Illegal/Irregular allocation of Public Land (Ndung'u Report)." Nairobi.

Government of the Republic of Kenya. 2013. "Second Medium Term Plan, 2013-2017."

(<https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/downloads/policy-database/KENYA%29%20Second%20Medium%20Term%20Plan%2C%202013-2017.pdf>).

Government of the Republic of Kenya. 2019. "Budget Options for 2019/20 and the Medium Term." Nairobi: Office Parliament Budget. Retrieved September 26, 2019 (<http://www.parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2019-03/Budget%20Options%202019-20.pdf>).

Grenz, S. and R. Olson. 1992. *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press.

Groody, D. 2007. *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Harris, D., M. Moore, and H. Schmitz. 2009. "Country Classifications for a Changing World." Retrieved September 30, 2019 (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b65ed915d3cfd000cc4/Wp326.pdf>).

Hellenic Shipping News. 2019. "China to take over Kenya's main port over unpaid huge Chinese loan." Hellenic Shipping News. Retrieved November 22, 2019 (<https://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/china-to-take-over-kenyas-main-port-over-unpaid-huge-chinese-loan/>).

Henry. 2018. "China to take over Kenya's main port over unpaid huge Chinese Loan." Architexturez Asia. Retrieved November 22, 2019 (<https://architexturez.net/pst/az-cf-190224-1545465613>).

Hout, W. 2019. "Classical approaches to development: Modernisation and dependency." in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Development* , edited by Jean Grugel and Daniel Hammett. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Human Rights Watch. 2002. "Playing with Fire: Weapons proliferation, Political Violence and Human Rights in Kenya." New York.

ICPAK. 2018. "Position paper on Public Debt Management: a case for Kenya." Retrieved September 26, 2019 (<https://www.icpak.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Public-Debt-Management-Brief.pdf>).

Kariuki, J. G. 2011. "The Future of Agriculture in Africa." *The Pardee Papers* (No. 15). Retrieved February 4, 2021 (www.ifad.org).

Katongole, E. M. 2005. *A future for Africa: Critical essays in Christian social imagination*. Scranton: The University of Scranton Press.

Kenya Commission of Human Rights; Kenya Land Alliance. 2006. "Unjust Enrichment: The Making of Land-Grabbing Millionaires." Nairobi.

Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis. 2010. "Kenya Economic Report."

Kinoti, G. 1997. "Africa must master Science and Technology to develop." Pp. 153-192 in *Vision for a Brighter Africa: Facing the challenges of development*, edited by George Kinoti and Peter Kimuyu. Nairobi: AISRED.

Lane, A. N. S. 2006. *A Concise History of Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Leys, C. 1996. *The rise and fall of development theory*. Oxford: James Currey.

Malthus, T. R. 1798. *An Essay on the principles of population*. London: The Electric Book Company.

Marsden, M. G. 1997. *The outrageous idea of Christian Scholarship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Martin, R. and A. Mathema. 2010. *Development poverty and politics: Putting communities in the driver's seat*. New York: Routledge.

Mbiti, J. 1975. *Introduction to African Religion*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Mehmet, O. 2002. *Westernizing the third world: The Eurocentricity of economic development theories*. London: Routledge.

Mlay, W. 1997. "The Population Question." Pp. 126-152 in *Vision for a Brighter Africa: Facing the challenges of development*, edited by George Kinoti and Peter Kimuyu. Nairobi: AISRED.

Moyo, D. 2009. *Dead Aid: why Aid is not working and how there is a better Way Forward*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Muigai, G. 2004. "Jomo Kenyatta and the Rise of the Ethno-Nationalist State in Kenya." Pp. 200 – 217 in *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* , edited by Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka. Oxford: James Currey Ltd.

Mulwa, F. 2008. *Participatory monitoring and evaluation of community projects*. Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa.

Mushanga, T. M. 2011. *Slavery and colonialism*. Nairobi: LawAfrica Publishing.

Myers, L. B. 2011. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. 2nd ed. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Nangoli, M. B. 2008. *Until Elections do us Part*. Africa: A. H Publishers.

National Sportslink. 2019. "China To Take Over Kenya's Mombasa Port Over Unpaid Huge Chinese Loan." National Sportslink. Retrieved November 22, 2019 (<https://nationalsportlink.com.ng/china-to-take-over-kenyas-mombasa-port-over-unpaid-huge-chinese-loan/>).

Oduyoye, M. 2004. *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books.

Onuoha, G. and M. Qobo. 2012. "Africa and Twenty-first Century Development Challenges: the North-South Development Agenda Reconsidered." Retrieved October 14, 2016 (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/HSRC-CPR.pdf>).

Parker, J. and R. Rathbone. 2007. *African History: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University.

Peet, R. and E. Hartwick. 2015. *Theories of Development: Contentions, Arguments, alternatives*. Third edition ed. New York: The Guilford Press.

Rodney, W. 2018. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. 5th ed. London: Verso.

Rostow, W. W. 1960. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-communist Manifesto* (:). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Save the Children. 2012. "A life free from hunger: Tackling child malnutrition." Retrieved October 1, 2019 (https://www.who.int/pmnch/media/news/2012/life_free_from_hunger_sum_briefing.pdf).

Sen, A. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sifuna, D. 1980. *Short Essays on Education in Kenya*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.

Solomon, S. 2019. "Kenyan Government Faces Backlash After Chinese Contract Leaks." VOANews. Retrieved November 22, 2019 (<https://www.voanews.com/africa/kenyan-government-faces-backlash-after-chinese-contract-leaks>).

Transparency International. 2015. "Corruption perceptions index." Retrieved October 10, 2019 (<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2015/index/nzl>).

Transparency International. 2018. "Corruption Perceptions Index." Retrieved October 10, 2019 (<https://www.transparency.cz/wp-content/uploads/Corruption.Perceptions-Index-2015.pdf>).

Turaki, Y. 2006. *Foundations of African Traditional Religion and Worldview*. Nairobi: WordAlive.

U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre. 2012. "Kenya: overview of corruption and anti-corruption." Retrieved September 3, 2019

(<https://www.u4.no/publications/kenya-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption.pdf>).

UNESCO. 2017. "Country profile – Rwanda." Retrieved September 3, 2019 (http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/FEI_Country_profile_Rwanda.pdf).

World Bank. 1993. "The East Asian Miracle: Economic growth and Public Policy." Oxford University Press.

World Health Organization. 2019. "World health statistics overview." Retrieved October 1, 2019 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/311696/WHO-DAD-2019.1-eng.pdf>).