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Engaging the Mission to “Restore the Dignity of the Black Man”: Challenges and Prospects

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The title of this lecture is intended to serve as a celebration of a mission that is not common in academia. Furthermore, the “mission to restore the dignity of the black man” has a long and complex history, dating back to the days of slavery in the United States and the Caribbean. What is unique about this presentation, however, is an engagement of a mission to “restore the dignity of the Black man” by an institution of higher learning in Africa. Not only is the mission very clearly stated, the institution, Covenant University, founded by its Chancellor Dr. David Oyedepo, in 2002, is structured and designed to prepare a new generation of leaders in Africa who would be the vanguard and facilitators of bringing into fruition, the mission with which we are concerned today.

It is without an iota of doubt, a willed mission with a difference. Dr Oyedepo couches the mission of the University within the realm of the divine. The source of such a mandate guarantees the success of the mission. The success, however, is tied directly to the structuring and implementation of the design. Its architecture, shrouded in the realm of the divine requires “quantities” in the form of manpower. The students, Faculty, management and staff of the institution constitute that manpower charged to carry out the mission. The structure within which the management, Faculty, students and staff work is second to none. Yet like missions prior to this one dating back to the 1800s with the objective of restoring the dignity of the black man, there are challenges, albeit, resolvable challenges in this instance. This present mission embarked upon by Covenant University has prospects.

One cannot engage the stated mission above without having an understanding of the background and context that necessitate the restoration of the dignity of the Black man. Both are deeply anchored in the history of events in the lives of Africans dating back to the days of slavery. Without a firm grasp of the history that gave rise to the need to restore the dignity of the black man, it is not possible to appreciate

and marvel at the accomplishment of creating Covenant University. I shall endeavour to provide insights into the background and context during this presentation by discussing the following key sub-topics.

I start with the Euro-American rhetorical construction of Africa and Africans, dating back to the days of slavery up to our time that created a paradigm to study and understand the black man, which has been very difficult to dislodge. I will then move on to examine the major movements that were created to work on the task of restoring the dignity of the Black man. These movements are: “Black” exodus, with the primary objective of African vindication, driven by what I have called the Pan-blackist ideology (Blake, 2011), necessitated by the need to debunk the Euro-American rhetorical construction mentioned above, and the call for an exodus of Africans to Africa from American slavery, to build up what was then referred to as “an African nationality” deserving of respect in the community of mankind. Following the discussion on Black exodus, I will examine the political move by Africans in Diaspora in collaboration with notable Africans in the continent in the 20th century to restore the dignity of the Black man by creating a pan-African movement as a means of resolving the African problem during the colonial era, and leading up to independence, and subsequently, the creation of a United African political entity. I will discuss briefly, the Nation of Islam that emerged in the United States in the 1930s, with an ideology that countered the dominant paradigm created by Whites mentioned earlier, with its own prescription for the restoration of the dignity of the Black man. I conclude with a discussion on the prospects for the achievement of the mission, with specific reference to Covenant University.

The Euro-American Rhetorical Construction of the African and Africa: The Paradigm of Ignominy and Shame

I must state upfront that this lecture is informed by work I have done over the years on how Europeans and Americans constructed Africans and Africa rhetorically as a means of demonstrating what they claimed

to be the inherent inferiority of Africans, and the barbarous and savage nature of their continent and selected Black responses to their paradigm.

The rhetorical construction has the following attributes that formed the bases for the paradigm I call:

- *Africans are naturally inferior to Whites
- *Africans were destined to serve mankind as attested in the Bible by citing the curse on Canaan
- *Africans lack any sense of morality
- *Africans have made no contribution to civilization
- *Africans are ahistorical
- *Africans are lascivious
- *Africans are libidinous
- *Africans are incapable of governing themselves without the firm White oversight
- *Africans are wicked
- *Africans are brutes and savages
- *Africans are heathens

The characterizations above were just not idly asserted. Notable Americans and Europeans advanced arguments in support of their assertion by citing evidence presumably from anthropological, philosophical and religious sources. Thomas Jefferson, referred to as one of the founding fathers of the United States of America, claimed that he had not encountered "...a black who had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration... or "an elementary trait of painting and sculpture (Peden, 1955, p.140). Hegel considered a world renowned philosopher dismisses Africa thus:

"We leave Africa not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit...what we properly understand by Africa, is the unhistorical, underdeveloped spirit, still involved in conditions of mere nature, and by which had to be presented here only as a threshold of the world's history" (1960, p. 99).

Hegel indeed had a tremendously damaging depiction of the African. He asserts further, “The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thoughts of reverence and morality – all that we call feeling – if we could rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character” (p96). As if this were not enough, he claimed that “Among the Negroes moral sentiments are quite weak, or more strictly, non-existent” (p.96). For Hegel, “In Negro life the characteristic point is that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence – as for example, God, or law – in which the interest of man's volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being “(p.92). Hegel paints the picture of the quintessential undignified man. He makes reference to history, but devoid of the knowledge of Africa's contribution to civilization thousands of years before Europe was civilized. From his projection, there is not even any aspect of “dignity” in the “Black man” that could be restored.

One could attempt to argue that the quotes presented are merely anecdotal. The fact of the matter is that Hegel and Jefferson were not the only Whites to deride the African. Kant asserts:

“The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feelings above the trifling... Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands that blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have been set free, not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality... So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color...The religion of fetishes so widespread among them is perhaps a sort of

idolatry that sinks as deeply into the trifling as appears to be possible to human nature... the blacks are very vain but in the Negro's way so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other with thrashings" (1960, pp110-111).

In order to dismiss any claim of the characterization being anecdotal than the formulation of a paradigm employed to deal with Africans, let us take a peek into the mind of yet another writer, Edward Long, who asserted that the African's

"...faculties of smell are not truly bestial, nor less their commerce with the sexes; in these acts they are libidinous and shameless as monkeys, or baboons. The equally hot temperament of their women has given probability to a charge of their admitting these animals frequently into their embrace. An example of this intercourse once happened, I think, in England. Ludicrous as it may seem I do not think that an orangoutang husband would be any dishonor to a Hottentot female" Pieterse, p.

There are many besides the Whites quoted above. Notable historical figures such as Arthur de Gobineau, Franz Boaz, and many others reinforced the construction and buttressed the paradigm. Even in our time, Nobel Laureates such as James Watson, William Shockley and Jensen had made disparaging remarks about the nature of the African.

In 2007, Former president Sarkozy of France stated in a speech on African soil (Senegal) that "The tragedy of Africa is that Africa has never entered history." He went on say that "The Golden age that [the continent] is forever recalling will not return because it never existed. The reification of the paradigm of ignominy and shame is quite evident in his utterances.

The historiography of African denigration supports the assertion that there was, and even is, a paradigm of ignominy and shame crafted by notable Europeans and Americans that formed the basis for the study and treatment of the African. The paradigm presents a warrant for racist and declarations of the inherent inferiority of Africans.

There were, however, leading African American spokesmen in the 1800s who argued against African exodus to Africa as a means of alleviating the plight of the Black man in ante Bellum America. They used the template crafted by Jefferson, Hegel, Kant, and others in discussing Africans and Africa. For instance, the imagery of barbarity, savagery, heathenism and immorality was a vanguard mounted and paraded by some notable African American spokesmen. They claimed American nativity and rejected any mention of Africa as their ancestral home, and the place they should return to for their well-being. A wealthy Black who lived in Philadelphia as a Freedman stated at a meeting convened to discuss Black exodus from America declared:

“We will never separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country; they are our brethren by ties of consanguinity, of suffering. And of wrong; and we feel that there is more virtue in suffering privations with them, than fancied advantages [of returning to Africa] for a season. Resolved that without arts, without science, without proper knowledge of government; to cast into the savage wilds of Africa the free people of colour seems to us the circuitous route through which they must return to perpetual bondage” (Garrison, 1968 p. 9.)

It does not take a rocket scientist to figure that the rhetorical construction of Africa and Africans by Whites served as the basis for warranting the rejection by African American spokesmen of the idea of repatriating freed Blacks to Africa, and reified as well the paradigm of ignominy and shame.

African American spokesmen opposed to any association with Africa during the 1800s demonstrated the depth to which the negative construction of Africa and Africans had permeated their psyche, when one considers this utterance by an Episcopal church minister: “We are an unlettered people, brought up in ignorance, not one in a hundred can read or write, not one in a thousand has a liberal education; is there any fitness for such to be sent to a faraway country [Liberia] among heathens, to convert or civilize them, when they themselves are neither civilized nor Christianized...[?]” (Freedom's Journal, November 2, 1827). The paradigm reigned supreme!

From Denigration to Restoration Schemes: Pan-Blackism

The paradigm of ignominy and shame regarding Africa and Africans discussed in the preceding section was not left unchallenged by other leading Black spokespersons who argued that Africa and Africans had a noble and rich past. They argued further that Africa made significant contributions to history about which whites were ignorant. In fact it was that glorious past that serves as a badge of dignity, and a dignity that needed to be restored only if Blacks in America and parts of the Caribbean would return to Africa and work towards the regeneration of the continent and restoration of its pride. The most leading spokesperson in the nineteenth century on the issue of African dignity and pride that required restoration was Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1916). Blyden was a Presbyterian minister, who was born in the Virgin Islands, travelled to mainland America, and later went to settle in Africa in 1850.

Blyden mounted a strong campaign to vindicate Africa and Africans, and debunk the paradigm of ignominy and shame. Through numerous speeches, scholarly publications and sermons that he delivered in America urging Blacks to repatriate to Africa he worked assiduously to redefine the African past. For those who dismissed Africa as having

no part in human history and no contribution to civilization, he pointed out that

Homer and Herodotus have written immortal eulogies of the race [African]. Homer speaks of them as the 'blameless Ethiopians,' and tells us that it was the Ethiopians alone among the mortals whom the Gods selected as a people fitted to be lifted to the social level of Olympian divines. Every year, the poet says, the whole celestial circle left the summits of Olympus and betook themselves, for their holidays, to Ethiopia [Africans were referred to as Ethiopians], where, in the enjoyment of Ethiopian hospitality they sojourned twelve days (p.112).

Herodotus is a legendary Greek historian and considered the father of history (Western) in some annals of history. An “unhistorical” people would not get mentioned and celebrated by no one other than Herodotus. Homer apotheosizes African virtue, a far cry from the paradigm of ignominy and shame. Blyden concretizes the apotheosis by arguing that

“Africa's lot resembles His also who had made himself of no reputation, but took upon Himself the form of a servant, and having been made perfect through suffering, became the 'Captain of our Salvation.' And if the principle laid down by Christ is that by which things are decided above, viz, that he who would be chief must become servant to all, then we see the position which Africa and Africans must ultimately occupy” (Blyden, 1881, pp. 116-117).

From the preceding standpoint, slavery must be seen as providential. It was a phase in the history of the race that was designed by God, just as the suffering of Christ was the will of God. Blyden was not alone in vindicating Africa and Africans. Frederick Douglass, the most celebrated African American who was enslaved and eventually became free, was the most outstanding African American spokesman

in the nineteenth century. His leadership role in the anti-abolitionist movement is legendary. In a speech during which he vindicated Africa and Africans he said:

“...the fact that Egypt was one of the earliest abodes of learning and civilization...Greece and Rome...and through them EUROPE AND America have received their civilization from the ancient Egyptians. This fact is not denied by anybody...the ancient Egyptians were not white people; but were undoubtedly, just as dark in complexion as many in this country who are considered genuine Negroes” (Douglass, 1972, p. 152).

Like Douglass, Blyden also referred to ancient Egypt with particular reference to the Great Pyramids which he considered the “profoundest truths of science, and religion.”

Besides what could be considered secular arguments in rejecting the White rhetorical construction of the African, particularly in terms of Africa's contribution to civilization, Edward Wilmot Blyden accounted for the African presence in the Bible. He cited Psalm 68:31, “Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will quickly stretch out hands to God.” The Bible makes several references to Africans and Africa. The issue here is that Africans are not an “Unhistorical” people as claimed by Hegel and others. Furthermore to state that Africans lacked any form of religion or belief systems is false. We also see the role a venerable personality, Simon the Cyrenian, a resident of Africa played during the passion of Christ. He helped Christ to carry his cross to Golgotha. The argument here is not whether Simon was a Black man or not. He was directly associated with Africa.

Being at a Christian University and not a pastor, or a Biblical scholar, I cannot definitively make claims about “colour” in the Bible, but can

with a degree of certainty authenticate a postulation that Africa was known to writers of the Bible, and not as a region of the world that was blighted to the point of oblivion. I can also say with a degree of certainty that Africa was largely peopled by Black people, and constituted a geographical area that interacted with other parts of the world at that time. We continue to do so.

There were many others in the 19th century who were vigorously engaged in vindicating the African past. Bishop Henry McNeal Turner was a firm advocate of respect for the African past and a strong campaigner for Black exodus to Africa. Martin Delaney, a physician is also well-known for his passionate and well-argued speeches on Black vindication. The list is not exhaustive.

In the early twentieth century, a most historic event occurred in the annals of the rhetoric of Black vindication. Marcus Garvey created the first all-black functional entity dedicated to vindicating the Black past and set up mechanisms for restoring the dignity of the Black man. His organization, called the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), was a formidable organization that promulgated the Black Consciousness ideology which was centred on pride and Black emigration to Africa. The word “association” is a bit of a disservice to the level of the complexity of UNIA. He founded a shipping line, the Black Star; organized brigades and had chapters of UNIA in various parts of the United States and other parts of the world. He had a following across continental boundaries.

Garvey was vilified and UNIA objectified. His uncompromising stance on the centrality of Blackness, and the imperatives of Blacks to return to Africa to create an independent national entity attracted as well Black detractors such as W.E.B. Dubois who attacked Garvey's stance on race. Garvey stated that he “believed in a pure black race just as how self-respecting whites believe in a pure white race, as far as that

can be.” On the issue of `the experience of slavery, he rejected the argument of providential design arguing instead that: “God almighty created us all to be free. That the Negro race became a race of slaves was not the fault of God Almighty, the Divine Master, it was the fault of the race. Sloth, neglect, indifference, caused us to be slaves. Confidence, conviction, action, causes us to be free men.” (Jacques-Garvey, 1969 p. 37). Garvey's initiative collapsed partly because of the mismanagement of UNIA, and a hostile environment in the United States and the British colonial empire that included a significant number of countries in Africa, because of his Pan-Blackist stances in efforts to ameliorate the Black condition worldwide and restore the dignity of Blacks.

From Pan-Blackism to Pan-Africanism as a Means of Restoring Black/African Dignity

The Pan-African movement was contemporaneous with the Garvey movement for a while. Their approaches to the restoration of the dignity of the Black race differed, primarily in terms of emphasis. Whereas Garvey's approach was staunchly race-based, the leaders of the Pan-African movement centred their strategy on the liberation of Africa from colonial rule and the eventual unification of the continent. The earliest promulgators of Pan-Africanism were Sylvester Williams and W.E.B. Dubois. In latter years, Kwame Nkrumah took over the leadership of the Pan- African movement. Ghana, until his overthrow in a military coup, was the focal point for Pan-African activities. The movement carried out its functions by organizing Congresses. Five such congresses were held prior to the beginning of African decolonization. The Second Pan-African Congress of 1921, for example, resolved in part that:

“The natives of Africa must have the right to participate in the Government as fast as their development permits, in conformity with the principle that the government exists for

the natives, and not the natives for the Government. They shall at once be allowed to participate in local and tribal government, according to ancient usage [as in traditional African governing systems], and this participation shall gradually extend, as education and experience proceed to the higher offices of state; to that end in time, Africa is ruled by consent of Africans..." (Padmore, 1971, p.103).

Clearly, this part of the resolution was one advocated strongly for the restoration of African dignity and pride. Africans had governed themselves. They had their systems of governance "according to ancient usage." Africans had indeed governed themselves without White instruction and oversight.

A resolution at the end of the Fifth Pan-African Congress even went further in indicting European intrusion in Africa that was justified by Whites as a need to civilize and Christianize Africans. The resolution read in part: "That since the advent of British, French, Belgian and other European nations in West Africa, [not necessarily restricted to that regional zone] there has been regression instead of progress as a result of systematic exploitation by these alien imperialist powers. The claims of 'partnership', 'trusteeship', 'guardianship', and 'the mandate' system, do not serve the political wishes of the people of West Africa." The resolution stated further: "That the democratic nature of the indigenous institutions of the people of West Africa have been crushed by obnoxious and oppressive laws and regulations, and replaced by autocratic systems of government which is inimical to the wishes of the people of West Africa" (Padmore, p. 142). These resolutions do not only seek to rebut, debunk, and ridicule the White construction of the African, but to make plain the existence of a democratic form of governance in "ancient usage". One does not need to go through any strenuous demonstration of argument to conclude that the resolution

was restorative in terms of bringing back the black man to his rightful place in humanity with dignity. The resolution cited above gives credence to the observation made by Chinua Achebe when he stated during an interview that the colonial era was one of “extreme totalitarianism,” (Achebe, 2003). It was a system roundly vilified by Western Europeans during and after the officially declared colonial era.

The Pan-African movement was contemporaneous with yet another movement called Negritude, based in France and led by Leopold Sedar Senghor, who later became president of Senegal, and Black Caribbean's Aime Cesaire and Leon Damas, among others. It was mainly an intellectual and literary movement, without any formal organization. Negritude adopted an anti-colonial stance and urged black unity. It celebrated the African personality as a means of restoring Black dignity and pride.

Religion and the restoration of the dignity of the Black man

Up to this point, I have talked about secular initiatives and programmes for the restoration of the dignity of the Black man. Religion or lack thereof, featured in the Euro-American rhetorical construction of the Black man. The Bible as warrant was abused by exponents of the argument about the inherent inferiority of the black man. A popular section of the Bible used in the rhetorical construction was Genesis 9: 21-27. Noah became a farmer and had a vineyard. He drank, got drunk, and exposed himself while asleep. Ham saw his father's nakedness and informed his brothers Shem and Japheth, both of whom covered their father, turning their faces so as not to see their father naked. Noah woke up from his sleep and knew that Ham had seen him naked, but it was Shem and Japheth who covered him. Noah cursed Canaan, the son of Ham saying: “Cursed be Canaan: a servant of servant he shall be to his brethren” (Genesis 9:25). He said as well,

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and may Canaan be his servant.” (Genesis 9:25). He also said: “May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem; and may Canaan be his servant” (Genesis 9: 27).

The entire episode recorded in the Bible was used as a means of justifying the enslavement of Africans, and condemning them to servitude. In order to contextualize the foregoing, the Biblical account of the peopling of the earth is explained as follows: “Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan” (18).”These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated” (19). Those who used the Bible as justification for the enslavement of Africans and their relegation to servitude claim that Shem is the patriarch of Whites, Japheth the patriarch of Asians, and Ham the patriarch of Africans.

It must be pointed out at this juncture that there is no reference to “race” or “colour” that could be used as a basis to cite Genesis 9:21-27 as a biblical justification for Blacks/Africans. The realities of slavery, colonialism and aspects of evangelization that denigrated African belief systems left a dent in the characterological make up of Africans.

Were there, and are there options in the realm of evangelization that aim to rescue the Africans from themselves and bring them into the fold so as to restore or instill dignity? I venture an answer to the question. Three options, to my mind, could have been considered. The first option is a complete and wholesome denigration of African belief systems, replaced by conversion to Christianity. Dignity could only be achieved by abandonment of African belief systems. The second option privileges choice. Evangelization would provide choices for Africans based on the strength of its argument, that what is offered to Africans is better or even superior to their belief systems. The third

option would make room for syncretism as is the case in Northern Brazil, where an African religious belief system and praxis, derived directly from the traditional Yoruba religious belief system co-exist, in synchrony with Catholicism.

In terms of advancing a preference among the choices mentioned above for the role of religion (as in organized religion and its offshoots), in the process of restoring the dignity of the Black man, as a scholar, and not a cleric, I do not consider my task here today as fitting for that exegesis. I will point out however, that religion as a means of addressing this mission of restoring the dignity of the Black man is not confined to Christianity alone. Islam has its infidels as Christianity its pagans.

In the United States for example, Elijah Muhammad, a cleric who preached a variant form of Islam under the rubric of the Nation of Islam, focused on restoring the dignity of the Black man by urging conversion to his type of Islam. He argued that the crisis of the Black man in terms of his undignified status in America was one of identity. He posits that the Negro is “mentally dead”, as a result of being robbed of his selfhood. Just as Whites rhetorically constructed Blacks that relegated them to an undignified status among human beings, Elijah Muhammad engaged in an extreme form of White denigration. His doctrine on whites is articulated thus:

“THE WHITE MAN became a hairy man until the birth of Moses because of the beast life he lived due to being deprived of the knowledge of self. They actually lived lives of beasts and acquired much of their characteristics. This is why the Revelator of the Bible refers to them as beasts...They acquired the characteristics of beasts instead of human beings. They were reduced to the status of apes and monkeys” (Golden and Reike, 1971, p. 405).

The harsh rebuttal of the Euro-American construction of the African cannot be overstated. Not only does the doctrine rebut assertions of the inherent superiority of Whites, it robs Whites of a presumed natural dignity over and above all races of mankind. The Nation of Islam stressed cleanliness among its followers. Men were impeccably dressed. Women wore Muslim dresses and covered their heads. He established businesses.

For Malcolm X, a Black minister in the Nation of Islam, Black “is the first color. “Black ...”is honorable, durable, and lasting. It is not easy to be changed under climatic conditions” (Golden and Reike, 1971, p. 405).He declared also that “Allah (God) is the father of the Creation of the heavens and earth. His color is black” (Golden and Reike, 1971, mp.405).Later in life, Malcolm X modified his stance on race after a pilgrimage to Mecca where he saw and prayed with Muslims of all races. He had serious conflicts with the leader of the Nation of Islam, broke away from it and was subsequently assassinated.

Our Mission “of restoring the dignity of the Black man”: Prospects

In order to see the uniqueness of and foresight in the declaration that our mission here at Covenant University is to restore the dignity of the Black man, it was necessary to present a historical context that problematized the status of the Black man over the ages, and approaches that have been proffered for its solution. For the first time in human history, we have a University in Africa, a Christian University, with a clearly stated mission to restore the dignity of the Black man. We do not proffer or promulgate any race or ethnic ideology. The founding of this institution concomitantly announced the demise of the Paradigm of Ignominy and Shame.

The only other attempt at institutionalizing the mission to restore the dignity of the Black man through the creation of a complex

organization was Marcus Garvey's UNIA. His was not only secular, it was decidedly political. A Malcolm X Liberation University was established in Chicago but was moribund. The early pan-African movement that did not realize its vision of a United Africa, and an ambition that is yet to be achieved was, and remains a secular mission if even still extant.

One of the most perplexing things that visitors to Covenant University always express is: “How could one man do all of this?” He had a vision; crafted a mission, created a university to carry out his mission; constructed a campus that is the envy of many not just in Africa but in other parts of the world.

The founder and Chancellor of Covenant University, provides answers, some of which I will cite here, and for ease of reference culled from Abioye, Awonuga and Amuwo (2014):

“Leadership is all about taking the lead, setting the pace and blazing the trail in one's field”. He recognized an exigency among others -- the undignified status of the Black man, took the lead by founding institutions at various levels including tertiary levels,” setting the pace [and] blazing the trail”.

“Great leaders are not those with chains of degrees but those who change the world.” The underlying message is the mission to change the world, and in the process, I argue, restore the dignity of the Black man. Engaging this mission is forward looking, not locking oneself in the dungeons of the past.

“The real worth of a leader is in the value he adds, the contributions he makes, the feats he accomplishes and the impact he engenders. “ This is perhaps, among the most profound statements made when

considering what it takes to restore the dignity of the Black man. Each component in that statement is manifest in this institution, and all other endeavors that he has undertaken and continues to pursue.

In retrospect, all of the initiatives taken by the leaders I discussed in the early part of this this presentation regarding their mission to restore the dignity of the Black man, did not emerge with successes that became sustained and institutionalized. Here at Covenant University, not only do we have a sustained and highly organized and firmly institutionalized setting to actively work towards the successful realization of our mission, we are creating a new generation of leaders who will sustain the drive. We continue to work hard on improving the quality of output necessary to achieve the mission, because we are aware of challenges that need to be met mainly in terms of creating a critical mass that would make a national and indeed, continental impact.

In conclusion, we cannot leave this Chapel without a reaffirmation of our commitment to the core set of values that are the pillars upon which the mission of this University is buttressed. For distant audiences, I take the privilege of restating our core values so as to provide a ready access to the driving principles and values of Covenant University: Spirituality; Possibility Mentality; Capacity Building; Integrity; Responsibility; Diligence and Sacrifice. These are the guiding principles and values that drive the mission to restore the dignity of the Black that are manifest within the context of the “Total Man Concept”.

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