

**THE LAND ISSUE IN ZIMBABWE: MISSIOLOGICAL
IMPLICATIONS FOR MARGINALISED AND OTHER
STAKEHOLDERS.**

by

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Abstract

The study looks at the land issue from the perspective of Missiology. It shows in what sense the land issue is an issue for mission. The pastoral cycle of Henriot and Holland is used to analyse the land issue in Zimbabwe. The analysis takes seriously the situation of the marginalized in Zimbabwe in relation to other stakeholders in the land issue. The study also looks at the ecological implications of the land issue. A comparison is drawn between South Africa and Zimbabwe as far as the land issue is concerned. A major aspect of the study is the theological question on God and land. The study concludes with a proposal on the kind of action that needs to be taken in resolving the land question.

Key Terms:

Missiology; Land; the poor; War Veterans; government; war of liberation; land in South Africa; the Church; the marginalized; post-independent Zimbabwe

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The land issue in Zimbabwe and Missiology

In my paper I intend to address the land issue in Zimbabwe in light of my own understanding of Missiology. The question to be examined is whether Missiology has anything to do with the land issue in Zimbabwe and Africa at large. Land is relevant in Zimbabwe and Africa if we are to be contextual. It is my intention, therefore, to show the connection between land and theology in both the Old and New Testament and how this can be applied most specifically in Zimbabwe.

1.3 About this study

1.3.1 Research Method of this study

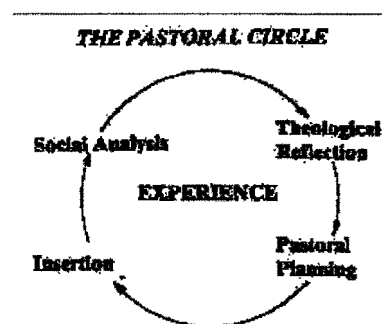
The missiological research method that I intend to use is a survey of literature studies, which relate to the topic under consideration. I will dwell much on published sources, most of which are missiological publications¹. I will also draw information from discussions with other students from UNISA's biannual seminars, discussions with my supervisor and the panel of examiners who have assisted me.

1.3.2 The missiological model of this study

¹ Some of the authors that I will consult include: Andelson, R.V. and Dawsey J.M. 1992, Auret, D. 1991, Bakare, S. 1993, Bourdillon, M.F.C. 1987; Brueggemann, W. 1986; Fager, A.J. 1993; *Gillan*, S.D.1998; Gillan, S.D. 1996; Kritzing, J.N.J. 1988; Maposa, I. 1995; Riddell, R. 1971; Verstraelen, F.1998 and WCC 1980

The theological model and terminology that I intend to use will be the Pastoral circle² as designed by Henriot & Holland (1983:9-10) and as adapted by the University of South Africa's department of Missiology (1999:14-15). This model involves Insertion, which is the basis for any pastoral action, and it locates the geography of our pastoral responses in the lived experience of individuals and communities. In this we find out what people are feeling, what they are undergoing, and how they are responding (primary data). We insert our approach close to the experiences of ordinary people to gain access to the primary data. Where, and with whom, are we identifying ourselves as we begin this topic is another issue to identify. It also matters as to whose experience is being considered and whether or not there are any groups left out. We also examine whether or not the experiences of the poor and the oppressed have a privileged role to play in the process.

The second stage of the circle of mission praxis³, social analysis, examines causes, probes consequences, delineates linkages, and identifies actors. It helps make sense of the experiences as it puts them into a broader picture and draws a connection between them. Social analysis also inquires about presumptions that need to be tested. Theological reflection is an effort to understand more broadly and deeply the analysed experience in the light of the living faith, scripture, church social teachings and the resources of tradition. This reflection also questions how closely linked the theology is to the social situation.



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³ Because it depicts an ongoing process, Dr. Karecki (1999:14) suggested adjusting the term circle of mission praxis for the pastoral circle. She also says that the circle combines action and reflection in a way that leads to social change or transformation.

And finally, following social analysis and theological reflection, is social action in which the question is asked, what response is called for, by individuals and by communities? How should the response be designed in order to be most effective not only in the short term but also in the long term? Other important questions to be addressed include the participants in the pastoral planning, implications of the process used to determine the appropriate response, and the relationship between groups of those who serve and those who are served.

I also hope to maintain a link between the situation at hand and the need for a practical theology that can be seen in mission. Newbigin (1989:121) defines “mission” as the entire task for which the Church is sent into the world. Whatever role the Church is to play in regard to the land issue in Zimbabwe or anywhere in the world is a part of the mission of the Church.

1.4 Limitations of this study

The land issue is crucial in the lives of Zimbabweans. It actually has always been crucial and, for as long as the people of Zimbabwe can remember, there has not been rest in seeking to redress the disparities in the present allocation of land between the minority and the majority. My focus will be mainly on the period from the early 1890’s to 2000.

The history of the land in Zimbabwe continues to be written and it would appear the pages increase every day with a new development. I do not promise to cover every aspect of the land in Zimbabwe, and even with the aspects that I will address, I do not intend to provide every detail. I will instead give what I believe to be necessary material for reflection that will be looked at from a theological perspective. I do not intend to answer every question related to the topic; however, I will address a number of issues and in the process, hopefully, answer a few questions. I hope that my paper will be a source of inspiration to some and that it can stir discussion and debate in different areas of

theological learning. I will occasionally refer to the land issue in South Africa⁴ by way of comparing and contrasting the different aspects, and I will attempt to justify this action.

1.5 Relevance of this study

The land issue is a subject worthy of our attention. Discussing and writing about it, especially the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe is not a waste of time. Some of the wars in the world at large are based on the struggle and quest for land (Gillan 1998:3). One feels the need to talk about this likely cause of wars. Often when people do not talk together about land usage, they end up fighting about it. De Mesa (1994:62) points out that in South Africa land has always been the subject of contention and that many wars have been fought over land. A leap from the Old Testament days to modern times reminds us that these justice and land-tenure issues persist throughout history (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:25). As we look at the Zimbabwe situation and at similar situations on the continent of Africa, we see the persistence of these issues. When handled with care, land has been a source of life and sustenance, hope, freedom and redemption. But where humans have been unable to make use of it in the right manner, they have experienced curses, exploitation, dispossession, disillusionment, captivity, and even death (Bakare 1993:7). It would appear that many people are in a state of denial in regard to the issues of land and the poor. Some people have gone to the extreme of employing the wrong understandings of theology and making false spiritual interpretations of Scripture, which has made landlessness a virtue instead of a condition for receiving land. And from that interpretation has developed the notion of poverty (landlessness) as a virtue (Brueggemann 1977:193). There has to be a positive understanding of the situation before positive action can be taken.

In talking about land, Mazamisa (in Gillan 1996:58) says that it “ubuntufies”⁵ God. He says that God becomes a person through land, and that God can only become the “Word that became flesh”, when he touches the earth. He believes that land is the transport by

⁴ South Africa is one of Zimbabwe’s neighbours and is on the southern part of the country. Its inclusion in the study is relevant in that it shares a similar situation.

⁵ Ubuntu is a Sotho term that means human. In essence Mazamisa is saying that land personifies God.

which God is carried to human beings. Any theology in the Southern African context that does not 'ubuntu' God is in trouble. Pre-occupation with existentialist decisions and transforming events has distracted us from seeing that this God is committed to land and that His promise for His people is always His land (Brueggemann 1977:6). Much has been said about the land and the question about where is God in all this should be asked. God's will needs to be ours. We have been entrusted with the land so that we can share it and we have been entrusted with the prophetic voice to challenge those who have more than enough. The Church has been silent for too long although it is the mouth-piece of God. It is time that we speak out very loudly so we can make up for the silence that went unabated for the past twenty-one years and beyond.

CHAPTER 2

THE ISSUE OF LAND IN THE CONTEXT OF ZIMBABWE

2.1 Personal experience

My name is Francis Mashoko and I became a citizen of Zimbabwe by birth on January 28, 1964. I come from Masvingo province, Bikita district and Magwidi village. I am a married father of two and I live with my parents. Although I work in town, I have a place in the rural area which I call home. I am still living within my parents' homestead, sharing the small piece of land which they have. When I want to farm, I have to ask for an acre or so from my parents who have about three-and-a-half hectares¹. This is the same situation for my six brothers; all of them except one are married and have an average of two children each. My oldest nephew² is already old enough to get married and soon he will be included on the list. I do not have a home or a field that I can call my own. This is true not only for my brothers and for me, but also for the majority of the people in my village and many others in the country.

However, the event that really started my thinking about land shortage was when I wanted to extend my two-room house. My father advised me against it. I could not understand until he explained to me the prevailing situation in the light of the land distribution policy. He said that the piece of land that he occupied was supposed to be for him and his wife and children who are not yet married. According to tradition, I was supposed to approach the kraal-head and ask for a piece of land on which I could build my own home. Unfortunately, for the particular area from which I come, those who are older than I am and those who got married earlier than I have taken up most of the land.

¹ A hectare is equal to 2.471 acres (Webster 1955:839)

² Edmore Mashoko is the first born of my second eldest brother and according to custom, my brother was supposed to provide shelter for his son until he had a home of his own. The complication is that my brother does not have a place to call his own, and is staying on my father's small piece of land. Most of the people in our locality are struggling with the same problem.

They have even used up the grazing areas. What is most significant is that this is true for most parts of the country. This is the backdrop of my existing situation, and I wish I could say it was a unique case, but there are many of us in the same situation. It is a situation where the lack of land as a central socio-economic issue in the history of Zimbabwe has created a sense of hopelessness, disillusionment, mistrust, threat and uncertainty. The landless peasants have become vulnerable and fearful of the unknown future (Bakare 1993:60). It appears hopeless to possess or work land that others cannot or will not let go.

2.2. Some facts and statistics relating to the land situation in Zimbabwe

Before I looked closely at the situation of land distribution in Zimbabwe, I did not understand why some people acted as they did. When I took a closer look at the situation, I found out that things are worse than I had ever imagined. I came to understand why some people are so bitter. There were times when I would watch the President and other land-hungry people talk about land so passionately and emotionally, and I never understood why. It is my sincere hope that all who read this paper will be more informed about the situation in Zimbabwe, leading them to a better understanding of it, and taking appropriate action where it is needed.

What I found out was that, on average, each person in the Tribal Trust Land has access to 3.4 hectares of land, while in the areas occupied by the settlers, there are approximately 423 hectares per person (Auret 1990:69).³ One would really wonder how people have survived under such inequitable conditions. If one could obtain the current figures, they would show how unbelievably bad the situation really is. In the area from which I come, it is the older people who have access to at least 3.5 hectares of land and most of them average eight children per household. As a result, people are impatient and the frustration that had been bottled up in them has found its way out and has been expressed

¹. Auret's figures were compiled in 1990. To date, a lot of people have been born and many have moved from neighbouring countries as either political or economic refugees, but the land has remained the same. The situation is now unbelievably bad even with some resettlement that has taken place already.

in several ways, such as the recent land invasions. The land situation in Zimbabwe is reflected in the words of Andelson & Dawsey (1992:72):

In the countryside, if people are starving while they
Are being fenced out of unused, fertile land from
which they could feed themselves, the land access
problem is obvious. In the city, vacant lots represent
potential shelter that is being denied to the homeless
and potential jobs being denied to the unemployed.
But for some reason, this urban land access problem
has not been so obvious to anti-poverty advocates.

It seems that for the past twenty-one years, the government has been aware of the situations, so I cannot imagine any other reason why the matter has not been given the attention that it deserves.

2.3 Women and the land issue in Zimbabwe

One of my sisters is a single parent who has four children. She has more children than anyone of us, her brothers, who have a right to the land. My father, being such a good man, could easily consider giving her access to the land, but this is not the case with everyone else. I doubt whether anyone can give a satisfactory reason as to why there is a discrepancy between males and females, save that when women are married they change their surnames.

Perhaps the most notable group affected by the land issue is the women. The reason is that they constitute the biggest number of those who make up the population of Zimbabwe. However, women have been marginalized. That meagre amount of land that is available is shared among men, and women are left out. As the Sandon News magazine (1995:3) points out, most of the fertile land is owned by whites; a large percentage of the remaining land is owned by men, whilst women's access to land is greatly limited. The paper (Sandon News 1995: 4) mentions several Zimbabwean traditional beliefs concerning land, which are most disadvantageous to women:

When a man dies, land is usually passed on to his sons or sometimes to his wife. Daughters are not allowed to inherit their father's land, although there are very few exceptions. There are some situations when widows are deprived of the land that belonged to their husbands. Women always bear the responsibility of tilling the fields and gardens, and fetching water and fuel wood for domestic uses.

Given the above situation, it should not come as a surprise that women deserve more land rights than they are afforded at present. It has become part of our culture that women are the keepers of the home, including whatever land there is. Regardless of the size of the family, the piece of land they have been allocated should produce enough food for the whole family regardless of how big the family is. Perhaps this custom should be revised so that the customary law reflects the actual situation more fairly and more accurately.

The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Council (1993: 11) agrees with the argument above for it points out that women play a crucial role in the agricultural sector where they supply over half the labour force. Bakare (1993:59) echoes the same sentiments in saying that although women are very important food producers and are in fact, the region's most important food producers, in Zimbabwe they have no rights to land. One might say, "what a shame," yet a bigger shame is revealed when one notes that the Church, which is supposed to be the torchbearer, is doing nothing about it. Worse still is if men continue to treat women unfairly in the day-to-day operations. Women should be given enough room to do what they can do best. Auret (1990:100) agrees that prior to the coming of the white settler, agriculture was the basis of the Shona economy and was primarily the responsibility of the woman. Women are the strongest group of people, yet, at the same time the weakest.⁴ He goes on to say that women are the key to productivity and he points out that the enormous increase in the agricultural production of the country since independence represents primarily an increase in the agricultural productivity of the woman (Auret 1990:117). He actually has every reason to believe that women are not "merely an aspect of society; they are the core of society." They have proved to be thus in

⁴ Without women's involvement there would not be even half as much success in the agricultural sector, hence their strength. They are hardly noticed and even oppressed indicative of their weakness. They are a majority who are in the minority.

every way. In the Zimbabwe setting, women are left at home while the men go into town or across the borders seeking employment.

The women are expected to make ends meet from the little they get. In many societies today, women are unable to experience or express the dignity and worth which the Bible affirms for them as being made in the image of God alongside man and joint heirs in Christ with men. Women's basic need is to recognise their own sense of worth, a sense of being needed, included and valued (Sugden & Wright 1990: 177). There are many societies for which the mistreatment of women is true, and this society is guilty of the same. The outcry for the liberation of women is even being heard in church circles where, as expressed in the words of Cochrane et. al (1991:40):

Women's experience in the Church is one of the contradictions. Men dominate the Church, as an institution. Authority and places in decision-making bodies are overwhelmingly in male hands. They (women) constitute its silent, if not silenced, majority.

Women are oppressed in many ways. They may not be declaring that they should get equal status with men, but at least they could be given the room they need to do what they can do best, regardless of their gender. The Church should show the way to the world, since she is the salt of the earth. God clearly acts for the helpless; the lame, the blind, the sick, women, and children (Andelson and Dawsey 1992:35). This goes to show that women are more important than a lot of people realise. They are worthy of God's attention and deserve attention from the society to which they belong. The practice of Christianity is shown in the identity of a Christian within a culture, as that culture is understood in terms of social change (Cochrane et al 1991:63). In a culture like this one, one's identity is very clear in regard to the way women are treated.

2.4 The land issue and the poor

The poor are also among the marginalized people in the issue of land distribution. The irony of the whole story is that they are deprived and sidelined. (Habel 1995:28) says

that, “the poor” usually seems to stand for the landless and economically deprived. Though the two terms are not synonymous, the poor would probably not be labelled so if they had land. They would be better off if they had land and other resources.

Maposa (1995:5) says that it is a fact that the government has leased out some of its land to government officials and the elite as opposed to resettlement for the landless and land hungry peasant farmers as originally intended. If the government already has land, which can be leased out, one would think that they could use that land to settle people. The poor, in some ways, are “richer” than others, for often the poor have a stronger sense of community and strength. The rich tend to be more deprived and isolated: “poor areas have smaller walls; the rich have higher walls to break down” (Sugden & Wright 1990:172). The poor, like the women, are stronger yet weaker, for they can still work together. It is interesting how the more one has the more one tends to be secretive. Most walls around homes, especially in towns, in the country are around rich people’s homes. The poor also have much that they can give to our society today. Even as the Kairos Document (in Cochrane et al 1991:52) reads:

Much of what we do in our Church services has lost its relevance to the poor and oppressed. Our services and sacraments have been appropriated to serve the need of the individual for comfort and security. Now these same Church activities must be re-appropriated to serve the real religious needs of all the people and to further the liberating mission of God and the Church in the world.

We need to bear in mind that there is mission because God loves people (Bosch 1991:392). If there were no people to love, there would be no mission, and no one should be involved in mission without a love for God and for “the least of these, my brothers.” (Matt. 25:45). Land plays a crucial role in every nation, for land means much more than the dirt and vegetation that grows on it, but as Andelson and Dawsey (1992:10) say, the primary form of wealth is not money (which is the means of exchange of wealth, not wealth in itself) but the combined power of land, labour, and learning. They go on to say that the most outstanding of the causes of abject poverty which millions of people in this world endure is that a mere 2.5% of landowners with more than 100 hectares control

nearly three quarters of all the land in the world-with the top 0.23% controlling over half. The people who monopolise the land need to realise that it is through various forms of exploitation, and most especially through monopolisation of land rights, that large segments of humanity are oppressed. The poor are signally vulnerable to the different attitudes that are displayed by those who are rich. Is this to say that the poor are in a self-created situation? Most of the poor are in this position because of other people and many of them cannot help themselves. It is unfair that they should be treated with contempt. When an economic situation has the character of permanency and is seen as wanted by God, who ordains everything, even our misery and deprivation, for our own eternal salvation, poverty is then seen as something natural and all one can do is to endure it patiently (WCC 1980:114). On the other hand, the temptation of thinking of God's bias for the poor in terms of a higher spirituality brought about by poverty needs to be resisted. Powerlessness does not in itself signify holiness (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:39).

The alleged biblical bias can be traced back to the nature of God himself. God finally, is the one who rejects power and takes upon himself, in the person of his Son, the ultimate sacrifice in solidarity with all who are crucified by the power structures of this world. He not only has compassion for the poor, but also becomes like them (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:39). If there should be no other consolation, God is on their side fighting for them. The poor should not lose heart knowing that the fight is not yet over. Even as the "comrades" would always say, "Struggle continues until final victory, and victory is certain."⁵ God also does not wish that the poor are treated as second-class citizens who need to be looked after; rather God acts to end poverty. The rich may perceive this good news to the poor differently. Unfortunately, this is a culture that has been created in our society and even in the Church. The poor will always be treated as inferiors and hardly does one think of eradicating the poverty that places them in a position of dependency. When people neglect the poor they seem to be saying that they know better than God,

⁵ "Struggle continues until final victory, and victory is certain." This is a slogan that was used by the freedom fighters during the war of liberation as they fought and encouraged people. They also thought that when the war ended they would have access to land.

who humbled himself and became man, hence becoming weak. However, to assert that God “rejects power” and “becomes weak” is clearly not the same thing as asserting that he is weak inherently (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:39). His weakness must be seen, rather, as related to his will to become one with his people. God must have a good reason for being identified with the poor. One wonder what it would have been like for him to be identified with the rich. If the poor were not important, why would God want to be identified with them? Having learned from the Lord himself, it should help one feel for the poor as opposed to the situation in the world today where, as the WCC document observed, and rightly so, that, “affluence and an inhuman level of poverty are coexisting side by side in this world.” While one section of humanity is dying from overeating, another is dying from starvation resulting in a “global tragedy” (WCC 1980:164).

Global tragedy sounds serious and it indeed is serious. How can some people die from overeating while others are starving to death? Those who have too much can surely give away some and still overeat. Awareness of the situation should drive people to greater levels of sacrifice for the sake of the poor. We should be seen to be interested in what God started in his attitude and actions towards the disadvantaged of our society. The WCC (1980:165) further observes:

In other parts of the Bible, God clearly acts for the helpless-the lame, the blind, the sick, women, and children. The helpless and those who trust God often run together in much of the Bible. And when Jesus said, “how hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24). He was stating the converse, that those who are not helpless are often most lacking in faith, too.

It would seem that the filled have no reason to trust in God for they already have their fill and, as they think, do not need God. It would be understood if the world mistreats the poor, because they do not know any better, but the Church, because of who they are, are expected to do certain things a certain way.

One of the biggest problems that has befallen the Church is that of wanting to please everyone. The dilemma is well described in the Melbourne Report (WCC 1980:115):

“At times the Church has wished for a twilight zone existence when she was neither this nor that-not champion of the poor for the fear of falling out of grace with the powers of State, and not collaborating with the state in order to retain her prophetic credibility with the faithful as well as her critics.”

It is an impossible situation, where the Church tries to have her cake and eat it at the same time. There is no need to try and make a discovery on something that has been found to be impossible. The same Church is seen as a body. If a part of the body does a thing, it is the body that has done it. The Church should demonstrate consistency as it is expected to do and should preach the good news to the poor. The Church would not be pioneering anything, for she has an example already from the one who expects her to act in this way, namely Christ. Christians should not be seen supporting one side or favouring one group between the rich and the poor, but be like their leader, the Lord Jesus Christ, who demonstrated a clear regard in favour of the poor. God is on the side of the poor as much as he is on the side of the rich, because he is not a respecter of persons. Jesus became one of them, worked with them, and struggled for their liberation, giving his life for them (WCC1980:116). This makes sense in that the poor are the ones who needed help. The rich on the other hand need to offer help, as Paul said to Timothy ‘command the rich to be generous’ (1Timothy 6:17-19). Why would we choose to attend to the rich if it is not to benefit from their abundance? Once we do that the poor will not continue to suffer. As we reach our begging hand we will also be offering a helping hand, for they too need salvation.

Andelson & Dawsey (1992:72) conclude that the root cause of poverty, which is the initial uneven distribution of wealth, “rewards parasites at the expense of workers.” They observe that however one looks at it, it is clear that there is the issue of the stranglehold of the landowners over the landless. It appears like a situation in which one either swims or drowns, or even more appropriately, one can do or die as the poor population is left

with a hard decision to make as they seek escape in cities, often becoming squatters in situations where they are exposed to harsh conditions (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:4).

As we look at the land issue in Zimbabwe, it is apparent that there are people who are sidelined in the distribution of this vital resource. In dealing with these groups and everyone else in the issue, we need to realise the role that Jesus played. He identified with the men and women of His day, many of whom were poor, hungry and dispossessed, crushed by the religious and political powers. The kingdom of God made itself known to them through Him, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, their lives were “dramatically transformed in the most surprising ways as they entrusted themselves to God” (Wilson 1990: 5-6). To be ashamed of being identified with the people, whether rich or poor, would mean being afraid of being identified with Christ, for he was identified with everyone, hence we follow in his footsteps. After taking a closer look at the situation and having armed ourselves with a little more information, we should be prepared to reflect upon it with the aim of improving the situation.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE LAND ISSUE IN ZIMBABWE

3.1 The need to go back in history

As we talk about the land issue in Zimbabwe, it helps to know the facts and figures regarding what has transpired up to now. With information, one can make a good judgement and decision. As we look at the social analysis of the land issue, it will help us in the areas of theological reflection and especially in theological action. It would appear that the land issue is uniform everywhere where it is not handled fairly, for we see the same activities prevailing. A very valid question is asked by Andelson & Dawsey (1992: 79):

Does the first passenger who enters a railroad car obtain the right to scatter his baggage over all the seats and compel the passengers who came in after him to stand up? Just as the passenger in a railroad car may spread himself and his baggage over as many seats as he pleases, until other passengers come in, so may a settler take and use as much land as he chooses, until it is needed by others- a fact which is shown by the land acquiring a value.

The answer to this rhetorical question is “NO”, yet this is what the colonists did. The colonists came, displaced the original occupants and pretended to be the first occupants. They spread their baggage permanently, for no one who came after them was afforded a seat in the car. The situation has created a landless people, who have become refugees in the land of their birth, and the loss of land meant to them a loss of identity. They felt psychologically lost and physically homeless (Bakare 1993:42). The situation is undesirable wherever it may be found, for as Andelson and Dawsey (1992:3) say, “through various forms of exploitation, and most especially through monopolisation of land rights, large segments of humanity are oppressed, dehumanised, and held in bondage.” In Zimbabwe’s situation, as well as other situations, where the rich and influential have used up land, and the result has been that the landless of rural regions

seek escape in cities, often becoming squatters on the street corners with open sewage and an unsafe water supply.

It is untapped potential where speculators, in cities and in farm areas, keep out-of- use land on which the hungry, the homeless and the jobless could feed, shelter, and employ themselves. It is also an egocentric thing for anyone to do. Why would one want to keep land only for the sake of keeping while others go without the bare necessities of life? The situation is described most accurately when the same authors write the following:

The monopolisation of land and other resources necessarily results in the exploitation of the monopolised resources, that is, labour, and in the under utilisation of all resources. Thus one primary purpose of the ownership of large amounts of land, both on the individual and on the social level, is not to use it but to prevent its use by others (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:15).

“Land reform” as a political slogan is used at times to imply redistribution and at times increased productivity, but those using the term seem deliberately to leave it vague and without real meaning. In general usage, the term refers almost exclusively to rural rather than to industrial or urban programs. When accurately defined, land should not have a political, rural or urban definition since it cannot be limited to one area of life. Everywhere one goes, one is confronted by the land issue; hence, the need to define it in every necessary context.

What helped the author of this paper to understand the situation of land was to look as far back as possible at where it all began. The Zimbabwean people had not always had the problem of land distribution. If anything, they had more than enough land for their purposes. Before the colonial times, the Shona and Ndebele lived in self-reliant communities. Their style of life was worth admiring and the missionaries and hunters admired the flourishing agriculture they saw in Zimbabwe (Bakare 1993:59). If the kind of life they lived was worth admiring, it must have been satisfactory for them. However, it is unfortunate that among the people that contributed to the negative changes, one

should find none other than the missionary's name listed. It was a situation where people were almost entirely dependent on the land, because, for all peoples, land was an invaluable asset, a pre-condition for life, growth and development (Verstraelen 1998:30). The situation has actually not changed at all, for people still get their livelihood from the land, which is their source of survival.

3.2 The historical seizing of the land

The land crisis did not start until the land was grabbed from the people of Zimbabwe in the late 19th century. Perhaps it should be called "Land Invasion Part One" or something like that, for this was real invasion in every sense of the word. Bakare (1993:51) says that the settler did not see the removal of Africans from their traditional communal land as a terrible thing. The African traditional concept of ownership was taken advantage of, for Communal land had been neither fenced nor plots clearly marked. For the British, unmarked land meant that it was not owned.

One such incidents happened when Rhodes' British South Africa Company invaded Mashonaland in 1890, and his men were each given 1200 hectares of land. Later when Jameson invaded Matebeleland, his men were given 1400 hectares each. The pushed the local people into reserves³ (Bakare 1993:59). The people came from a life where they had so much land they did not know what to do with, to a situation where they had to scramble for it in the reserves. This writer lives in the reserves and knows what the situation is like from first hand experience. People are farming on mountains and it no longer matters what land is allocated for what purpose, be it grazing or graveyard land, people are utilising any space they may find. (Munslow 1985:42) says that at some point there was a report that 57% of the reserves were over-populated and that the reserves were carrying 250% above the recommended population. There were two and a half million people in excess of safe carrying capacity.¹

¹ Recorded in the document Proposals for a five-year programme of development in the Public Sector. Annex: Integrated Plan for Rural Development, July 1978 (Salisbury : Ministry of Finance, 1979)

It was, however, not only through force that the land was taken from the people, for at times the British settlers also took control over the land by treaties (agreements). Lobengula (who was the leader of the Ndebele people and basically the national leader) was tricked into signing treaties that he did not understand (Bakare 1993:59). Whatever way, the land was taken, and the important issue is that it was taken away from the people, its original owners, into the hands of foreigners. As if this was not enough, stricter measures were taken that left the owners of land with hardly any land to call their own, and also without freedom to use the pieces of land as they pleased. Acts such as the Appointment Act of 1931, the Maize Control Act, Land Husbandry and Land Tenancy Act were passed, and these gave the settlers more land and more money. There was also a limit of five cattle per farmer.² The country was virtually divided in half between indigenous Zimbabweans and settlers; the settlers getting a hundred times more than indigenous farmers (Bakare 1993:61-62). This means there was a limit placed on the indigenous people on how far they could go in bettering their lives. They had become a limited people economically. The type of land that they occupied also left a lot to be desired. According to Auret (1990:69), what was critical for the future agricultural productivity of the farmers was that the land was so divided that 74% of the reserves, 'Tribal Trust Lands' fell into regions four and five; into the areas of least rainfall where the soil is poor, acidic and sandy. Perhaps there was an agenda that was never pronounced. Where was the sense of ethics and morality when all this was happening?

One cannot help but wonder what was going on in the minds of my brothers, the missionaries, as all this was happening. It is unfortunate that even our brothers, the missionaries, were found among the ones who took possession of the land and because the missionaries owned land just like the settlers and apparently (in the eyes of the Africans) lived according to the same foreign cultural and economic norms, it must have been very difficult for the African to make any distinction between mission and colonialism (Saayman 1991:29-30). The missionaries obviously wanted to please their

² This was done in the interests of conservation. Masilele and Weiner observed that this justification ignored the fact that it was the actions of the colonial state via its land alienation practices that marginalized African populations onto ecologically fragile areas. (RWPR 1996:33)

fellow men and perhaps did it out of a good conscience without realising the implications of it all. However, the few who did speak out were thrown out of the country. Possibly fear played a role too.

3.3. Historical cultural considerations

All that happened with the passing of acts and subsequent displacement must have had a stripping effect on the people of the land considering their cultural link with the land, for as Bourdillon (in Verstraelen 1987:70) says, "The land forms a close and enduring bond between the living and the dead".

The Shona people the real 'owners' of the land are said to be the spirit guardians³, while ultimate dominion over all the country is in the hands of the high God-Mwari or Musakavanhu- who is approached to provide rain and good crops (Verstraelen 1998:104). It is a comfort to notice that there seems to be a place for God in all this. There is acknowledgement, though more than just that is needed. There would also be need to acknowledge that God is the Creator and owner of the land-even the land in Zimbabwe. According to Wilson(1990:45) the land and its people have a unique relationship:

For indigenous tribal peoples, the land of their birth, their ancestors, their history and their heritage is part of their personal community identity, part of themselves. It is their existence, their life. They neither "possess" nor live on the land, but consider themselves an inseparable part of the land, enjoying the God-created beauty, the essential goodness of their unique part of the universe.

The cultural make-up of the tribal people has not been the same ever since, but who knows, it could be "paradise regained" some day when things return to their original form. One concept which is hard to understand is the role of the ancestral spirits in all this. One tends to wonder why they should be so involved. People often give credit to God and the ancestral spirits at the same time. It may be that they are afraid, if they refer

³ It should be noted that the Shona people are divided into different groups and their beliefs about the connection varies according to the Geographical location of the people. (Chiundiza 1991:123:124)

to God and leave out the spirits, that they would disappoint one or the other, yet the conclusion in every request is referred to God (Musikavanhu).

Ancestral spirits are said to be the spirits of the dead ancestors and they are believed to be guardians of the living people. They are sometimes referred to as the living dead, hence the belief that people do not die completely. They are also seriously revered among the Zimbabwean people. However, the superiority of God is acknowledged. The same idea is expressed by Andelson & Dawsey (1992:9) when they say that the land belonged to the people, the tribe, the chief as given by God. It could no more be monopolised, bought, and sold than air could be monopolised, bought and sold for the benefit of individual owners. All this seems to make perfect sense, but what is happening among the people of Zimbabwe, who are supposed to be believers of this, is just the contrary. "Land, for the Zimbabweans, consists of things that can be qualified and not quantified. It offers them identity, history, a livelihood, and it is sacred. No one who understands this kind of heritage and linkage would sit and watch while it continues to be disrupted," (Saayman (1991:29) says:

To understand the profound influence of this event one should keep in mind the very intimate link between African people and their land. Certain places of this land are holy. Also on the land are the graves of the ancestors, the link between the generations, guarantors of present and future well-being. This is the land, which was summarily dispossessed, generally without any awareness of the meaning of the deed.

Whatever use the land was put into, there is no good reason why the missionaries should have participated in the land grab of this country or of any country. Harmless as it may have looked then, the after-effects of the action were not desirable. Saayman (1991:26) goes on to say, "It was unavoidable that mission would therefore come to be seen by the colonised people as the religious justification for this economic exploitation. The Zimbabwean people understand their background and it was with this understanding that efforts were made to restore the 'lost glory'."

3.4 The liberation war

After all possibilities, including silence, had been tried and nothing seemed to work in the situation of land in Zimbabwe, war was found to be the best answer.⁴ Edigheju (Africa Insight 2000:32) describes the situation well when he says,

The liberation struggle of Zimbabwe led by ZANU-PF held high hope for all Zimbabweans, particularly the black population who for centuries were dominated and oppressed by a racist colonial regime. Under the colonial regime, the minority white group dominated the social and political system and controlled the economy including the land and the formal business sector.

In 1963, the Zimbabweans began to fight against the colonialist. The objective was to regain their land. This war was fought and blood was spilt over the ownership of land. Lasting peace and prosperity can only be achieved if the land is shared equally (ZCBC News 1997: 7). Consequences of the war were well understood; some would die, and they did, but some people were prepared to die if it was for land. As Maposa (1995:16) says, "What nobody should lose sight of is the realisation that land redistribution is at the heart of social stability just as it was at the core of the war to liberate Zimbabwe." There might have been many reasons, including some silly ones why people went to war, but most of the people fought so that land could be given back to the Zimbabweans. However, there are some who may have lost the vision altogether and these, are the elite which has amassed land to themselves and lost the bitter memories of the war of liberation. Verstraelen (1998:106), observes that the elite has become blind to the plight of the land-less peasants, some of them with no place to call a home. This author was not old enough to fight but played a role in this struggle. After having taken some blankets and food to the 'comrades' or 'vanamukoma' as the freedom fighters were called, we would spend sleepless spent singing revolutionary songs together. Speeches promised land to the people once the war was over and people would often be reminded of such anomalies as seventy- seven percent of all European farming land was covered by

⁴ As to which party was leading the struggle it depends mostly on particular stage of the war, for at other times we see Zapu leading in the struggle.

only 1. 658 farms or an average 16,000 acres, whereas the vast majority of the tribal cultivators had access to plots less than ten acres in size (Riddell 1971:10). It may not have been in the exact figures as Riddell gave them, but it did not take a genius to see that something was wrong in the allocation of this vital resource.

3.5 Independence and post-independence period in relation to the land issue

18 April 1980 saw Zimbabwe become a sovereign nation. Everyone celebrated, for everyone had waited for this day when they would be free at last. All awaited the “promised land” from April 18 and some are still waiting today. It is not that the government was not willing to give the land to the people, for one would often hear people saying that the task facing the government is indeed challenging and daunting. It involves rehabilitating the economy, particularly in the rural areas, resettling thousands of the people as well as making sure that vital social services are restored or introduced for their benefit (Auret 1990:72). This is quite an acceptable attitude, but would be more acceptable if it translated into action, and some of the attitude was transferred to action for by 1984, 21,109,480 hectares had been bought and 225,000 people resettled. The settlements were well organised and where infrastructures were laid down, 65 hectares were given to one person (Bakare 1993:70). If things had continued steadily at this rate, it would have helped the country and over ten million people. There are obviously a few more resettlements that were made a part from this one such as the ones that took place following the Land Acquisition Act passed in 1992 where the government embarked on a compulsory⁵ acquisition of land. It was a good thing for the government to settle so many people at that particular time. Many more were settled under different schemes, but the fact that people are still grumbling shows that more could be done. One had to submit an identity number to the kraal head who was said to take care of the situation for consideration in the allocation.

⁵ Under this scheme the government had four types of resettlement models, which were called A, B, C and D. There were eleven resettlement schemes under the four models A to D. These varied from a communal settlement system to commercial farming (Maposa 1995:5).

3.6 Recent developments

Since the land issue is ongoing, history continues to be written. There have been recent developments in this regard. The government has further taken a stand in the issue of land redistribution. They have passed a bill in parliament, which allows them to acquire farms without necessarily paying for them. All they have to do is to pay for the development on the particular farms.

The straw that broke the camel's back, it would seem, is the random occupation of farms by war veterans and other land-hungry Zimbabweans. The elite has become blind to the plight of the landless peasants, some of them with no place to call a home. Land is there to be shared between brothers and sisters, and not to be hoarded for self-security (Bakare 1993:53). "Edigheji (2000:33) expresses the same sentiments when he says, over the years the ruling elite has ignored the sufferings and yearnings of the people." The land hungry people, who included war veterans,⁶ just occupied farms at will, regardless of whose the farms were. The Daily Newspaper (February 2000) carried a story about war veterans and land hungry people who illegally occupied farms in the Hwedza commercial farming district in February 1999. This has resulted in many people losing their lives and others being grossly mistreated by the farm 'invaders' because of lawlessness. People have argued that the occupations should not be termed invasions, since the land belongs to the Zimbabweans. However, if it belonged to them, they would not have worried about violently occupying farms, instead they would have returned home without making any noise about it. Edigheji⁷ (2000:33) also reports of other land invasions taking place in early 2000, when he says, "Since the beginning of the crisis, ten people including three black arm workers, three white farmers and a police officer- have to date been killed by the veterans with about a hundred people injured and a score more abducted." The land is

⁶ The War Veterans are people who are supposed to have fought in the war of liberation that lasted from the early 70s to 1980 when Zimbabwe gained independence. However, what has puzzled many people is that some of the self proclaiming war vets are far too young to have fought in the war of liberation. They should be saluted for spearheading the exercise and 'forcing' the government to take action.

⁷ Omano Emma Edigheji was a PhD candidate at Norwegian University of Science and Technology when he wrote his paper in which he drew parallels between events in Zimbabwe and Malaysia and also considered implications for South Africa.

rightfully theirs by virtue of them being Zimbabweans, but the violent manner in which some of them did this should be disputed. While taking action, the War Veterans would stand to gain if they refrained from violent behaviour. It was Martin Luther King Junior's basic philosophy to avoid violence as recorded in an interview⁸:

A moral man cannot in good conscience accept and adjust to an evil system. He must resist it, he has a moral obligation to resist evil but in resisting it he must recognise that he stands on higher moral grounds when he resists that unjust system non-violently. The individual seeks to achieve moral ends through moral means (USIS 1964).

It has been said that two wrongs will not make a right. If the system is wrong and one decides to take up a wrong action against the system, then both the system and the person become wrong. Yes, one might achieve one's goals but since when has the end justified the means? The Kairos document(1989:58), concurs with Martin Luther King, Jr. as seen in the following:

This is not to say that any use of force at any time by people who are oppressed is permissible simply because they are struggling for this liberation. There have been cases of killing and maiming that no Christian would want to approve of. But then our disapproval is based upon a concern for genuine liberation and a conviction that such acts are unnecessary, counter-productive and

Many wish that none of the above were not true of the situation in Zimbabwe. However, the result of ones' action is actually more honourable if the individual is not to blame. When all this happens, people cannot just look on and hope that things will sort themselves. Instead, one should, like the congregation at Jerusalem, which very early on one of its leaders, Peter, openly made some bold claims about the injustice involved in the killing of Jesus (Acts 2:22-24). He made these claims openly as part of important public statements. Is it not our responsibility to speak out when there has been an abortion of justice or in situations where no attempt has been made to promote it;

⁸ This interview came out through the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation using a tape that was compiled by the United States Information Service.

however, it is one's duty to speak where it is necessary to do so, especially if the truth is spoken in love.

3.7 Post-independence struggles

Twenty years into independence, there remains an imbalance in the allocation of land. It is hard to believe that during the time of imperial/colonial white minority rule (1890-1980), 181,424 square kilometres were apportioned to whites, while 182,099 square kilometres were given to blacks (Verstraelen 1998:103). Such a set-up, which has not changed much, should have created a sense of urgency to anyone who knew about it. Because of the kind of land allocation that existed there was, and could be, a situation whereby in the communal areas 73% of the land was cropped allowing only 17% to lie fallow, while in the large-scale farms only 21% was utilized (Auret 1990:72). The situation has not changed much, especially in the large-scale farms, but what may have changed for the worse is the situation in the communal areas where at this point more than 73% of the land has been utilized. If this practice continues unabated, it means that there would not be much change in the situation that existed in 1980 where, according to Auret (1990:73), the commercial farmer had accounted for 95% of marketed surplus and nearly 100% of agricultural export earnings. Such a situation would create an imbalance in the economy of any nation and would need attention. The issue of land is a question of access to wealth, the question of the livelihood of the nation and the question of human rights (Verstraelen 1998:102). The government in 1980 said that they would resettle 162,000 households by 1985, and by that target date, only 35,000 households had been settled (Bratton 1984:187). As long as the question is not fully addressed, the nation will continue to suffer economic imbalances. There seems to be a link between the economic, social, and political factors and the ministry. The economic exploitation involved in colonialism (because of its capitalist origins) has, to this day, a detrimental effect on missions (Saayman 1991:25). If we are interested in the mission of the church and to a point where it is effective, we need to consider economic liberation of the people.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RELATION TO THE LAND ISSUE IN ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 Effect of the land issue on ecology

What happens regarding the issue of land distribution does not only affect the nation economically but in many other respects, such as ecologically. In the long run, the land itself suffers from overuse by the overpopulation it experiences. According to a United Nations Development environment expert (Verstraelen 1998:106), "inequitable land allocation, poverty and poor farming methods have led to land degradation and diminishing water supplies in Southern Africa" Katerere (in Verstraelen 1998:103) goes on to foresee a bleak environmental outlook if the situation were to continue the same way. The ecosystem should be affected by our lives in that we would be confirming the goodness of all creation and the lovability of the world into which God sent his only Son (John 3:16). If one is interested in the goodness of all creation, which one should be, then dealing with the present situation will make things go well for the ecosystem, especially if God be the centre and our source of survival.

This massive overpopulation in the Tribal Trust Lands, now called communal lands is bringing ecological disaster to the land. In the attempt to accommodate the increasing population, land designated as suitable only for grazing purposes has been gradually turned over to arable cultivation. In 1965, 50% of the grazing land in the Tribal Trust land was classified as either bare or heavily overgrazed (Riddell 1971:9). The situation at hand is beyond expression. It will take ages after resettlement for the homelands to be rehabilitated. The rapacious and careless destruction of tropical forest has been stopped or slowed down in some places, but overall, the role of destruction continues at a pace which threatens the very existence of these invaluable and irreplaceable ecosystems (Zimbabwe Science News 1982: 273). It is impossible to stop the land degradation without exterminating the Zimbabwean majority from the face of the earth. If survival is to take place in Zimbabwe, some destruction of the environment has to take place unless

there is enough land where people can practice environment friendly methods of farming. There are many effects of the land degradation; more species of animals and plants are in danger of extinction, including some that are vital to maintaining food production (Z S N 1982: 273). Even the "Herald", the government owned paper, agrees. Inequitable land allocation, poverty and poor farming methods have led to land degradation and diminishing water supplies in Southern Africa (Herald 14 Nov. 1995). If people are not careful, they will realise too late that the land has been lost and no amount of fighting would be able to bring it back. This should concern all because "everything that injures the earth also injures the children of earth." By failing to protect the interests of the earth, the people are also failing to protect themselves.

4.2 Land issue in South Africa

The author has gone to South Africa for more than five times now and every time he has gone, he has been amazed at the similarities on the landscapes. As the bus roars through all those fields, which seem to be deserted, one cannot help but notice the similarities of the situation. The fact that Zimbabwe and South Africa are neighbours has affected many things. Edigheji (2000:34) affirms when he says the following:

A politically unstable Zimbabwe could be a grave danger to the entire South African region. There is no doubt that such instability could result in mass migrations to other countries in the region, particularly South Africa because of its relatively better economic conditions.

Out of curiosity, the author wanted to see what happened in South Africa that led them into a situation like ours here in Zimbabwe. It is in this mood that he will juxtapose the two countries as he compares them. He will mostly dwell upon the South African situation and throw in bits and pieces from the Zimbabwean side. This should be understandable, for I have devoted three-quarters of my space to the Zimbabwean situation, bearing in mind the dissertation topic.

What has happened in South Africa has tended to affect life in Zimbabwe and vice- versa. The land issue in both countries is no exception. As the author has taken a closer look at

the situation in both countries, he has observed that there are many striking similarities in the situations of the two countries. There, too, are differences, but the similarities are overwhelming and are many. It is for this reason that he will take time to reflect on our neighbour's land situation and hope that the situations can help both countries.

At a Community Land Conference held in South Africa, it was said that a typical farmer in the rural areas is a woman with a baby on her back. (Gillan1996:294). It is interesting to note that the seemingly unnecessary details of the child on the woman's back were added. It is bad enough that the female is all by herself and in charge of the nurturing of the children, but is also the one to take care of the land, to make sure it produces food for her, the baby and the whole family. One difference to note, however is that the South African people have made strides in the direction of correcting the anomaly. There has even been a breakthrough in some areas. In other areas, although no significant progress has been made, it is noteworthy that the land invasions¹ that took place in Zimbabwe twenty one years after independence have already taken place in South Africa only seven years into independence.

4.3 Similarities between the Zimbabwe and South African land situations

Both countries have as a common background the fact that their citizens once had land and now they do not. Sachs (in Gillan1996:1) says, "it addresses land struggles black, white and green, uniting people and land in a community of life: When we say "Mayibuye iAfricka", come back Africa, we are calling not only for the return of legal title, but also for the restoration of the land." Restoration means bringing back to a former state or condition (Webster 1953:264). The former state is when land was in the hands of the black South Africans. For Zimbabwe it is the same thing. In describing what happened in the dispossession of the land, Claassens (1990:27) states,

¹ There may have been scattered and insignificant invasions or 'squatting' that took place since independence, but the one I am referring to is the one that took place in 1999 leading to the seriousness of government regarding land redistribution. In South Africa the invasions took place this year.

When the Whites took our land away from us we lost the dignity of our lives. We could no longer feed our children. We were forced to become servants, we are treated like animals. Our people have many problems, we are beaten and killed by the farmers, the wages we earn are too little to buy even a bag of mealie-meal .

The number of committees, commissions and general organizations that have been formed to address the land issue impressed me. The ones that are recorded in Gillan's thesis² amount to more than twenty. The reason for the formation of the organization is because people have refused to be spectators in the process of the restoration of the land, and they have chosen to act in solidarity (Gillan1996:6). While the war veterans of Zimbabwe played a crucial role in getting the leadership on their toes, it is this kind of action that is noteworthy and I believe is also more credible.

Just like in Zimbabwe, the South Africans place a great deal of sentimental value in the land, for they consider the land to be "an inherent part of the identity and humanity of its people; indeed, the people of South Africa call themselves sons and daughters of the soil" (Gillan 1996:6). The South Africans are even more gender sensitive. The Zimbabweans often use the phrase 'Son or Man of the soil' to depict connection with the soil. Though in both situations, we see a dependence upon the land as a livelihood, but the Zimbabweans benefit more from agricultural products than the South Africans. In Zimbabwe, tobacco only accounts for more than a quarter of Zimbabwe's foreign exchange earnings (Christiansen 1993:1550). Moreover, Bratton (1984:179) says that almost 70 percent of the population depends on farming as a source of subsistence and income, and one-quarter of all wages employment is in the agricultural sector.³ On the contrary, the majority of the South African black population earns its income from wage

² David Gillan wrote his doctoral thesis on A Grounded Theology of Land Restitution in South Africa with the University of Edinburgh in 1996. The thesis has been a part of my resources. He also edited a book on land and it has also been a part of my research materials. These include the Community Land Conference (CLC), Advisory Commission of Land Allocation (ACLA), Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA), Barolong Action Committee (BAC), Back to the Land Campaign (BLC), Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR) (Gillan1996:x).

³ Taken from the Zimbabwe Quarterly Digest of Statistics (June 1985) remedies to people dispossessed by the colonial systems.

employment (Mbeki 2000:172). For this reason he says that the land issue in Zimbabwe will not affect the situation in South Africa.

4.4 A call to a healthy attitude towards land

Confession and forgiveness necessarily require restitution. Without it, a confession of guilt is incomplete. As a first step towards restitution, the Church must examine its land ownership. What really do the people want in regard to land in Zimbabwe and South Africa? The South African people place importance on restitution, which the Zimbabwean people hardly talk about.

The struggles for land in South Africa started before independence in 1994 with such groups as the Back to the Land Campaign (BLC) began. It was comprised of eleven rural and landless communities, which came together in 1990 to discuss their struggles and critique the De Klerk government concerning land reform. Gillan in his paper states that the rural people are patient but their patience was not everlasting. If nothing was urgently done about the land situation, they were bound to go back to their land (Gillan 1996:72). It has been said that the land invasions that took place in Zimbabwe would also take place in South Africa. The reason being that both countries have failed to develop and eradicate poverty (Scheepers 2000 :14). Zimbabwe has failed more, for it has been longer since they have had a chance to "deliver the goods." ⁴

4.5 Women and land in South Africa

The BLC has included as part of its campaign the right of women to own land. In the Zimbabwean context you might find a group of women talking about their right to own land like the group represented by the Sondon News paper or the WAG (Women's Action Group). Women should be able to own land whether they are married or not. Married couples should have their houses registered in the names of both spouses.

⁴ However, that idea has been ruled out by the President Tabo Mbeki. They have enjoyed independence for a much longer period than the South Africans.

Women and men should have the same right to land (Gillan 1996:279). This request was actually granted.

Land should be set aside for communities' facilities which benefit women, such as crèches, community garden and women's training centres (Gillan 1996:279). One of the reasons given for the seeming priority to be given to women is that they constitute the majority of the rural population and carry that the heaviest burden of discrimination because of their status as historically disadvantaged people (Gillan 1996:279)

4.6 South Africa's determination

The people of South Africa are involved in the land discussion even from grassroots level as we can see in the Community Land Conference where rural people had a conference for themselves instead of having conferences held for them. Being landless and poverty stricken is characteristic of the rural people of South Africa (Gillan 1998: 22). We have already seen that Zimbabwe is not spared from these characteristics.

The preamble of the Land Charter, which was a platform for the people of South Africa to discuss the land issue, reads, "We look forward to the birth of a new South Africa, but for us there will be nothing new until there is land and services and growth. We will not sit back and watch as the weal builds up in the cities, while on the edges of the cities, in small town and in the countryside, we continue to suffer and starve" (Gillan 1996:20).

The South African people have done a much better job in keeping records than the Zimbabweans. As one reads about the different court cases and reports of the evictions and the claims the people have of their land, one is amazed at the preciseness of the records. This is true of the situation of the Sheridan and the Uityk farms⁵ (Gillan 1998:29:35)

⁵ Two stories of groups of people, the Sheridan and the Uityk people who lost land that was and could be legally and rightfully theirs, respectively. Both stories involve missionaries.

In answering the question of what South Africa can learn from Zimbabwe's experiences with land, Edigheji (Africa Insight 2000:34) had this to say,

The South African government(ANC) has put in place some measures, although uncoordinated and incoherent, to redress some of the past racial imbalances. These include its affirmative action policy in the public service, the Skills Development Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Employment Equity.

This shows some strides that have been made to correct the unfair situation that prevails. The South African people have yet to see more done for them regarding the land issue in their country.

4.7 Hermeneutics of the land

The South Africans seem to place more sentimental value to the land than the Zimbabweans. Gillan (1996:80), says, "with respect to an implicit sense of text, that the very existence of the grave in the landscape, whether they bear a written text or not, is textual. Land relates to the ancestors. To appreciate this one needs an ancestral hermeneutics concerning land. Land is the blanket that covers one's ancestors. When the people's land is taken away, the blanket that covers the ancestors is also removed. (Gillan1996:34). The idea of one belonging to the earth or being a son or daughter of the soil is an enduring aspect of the Africans' being (Gillan 1996:36). Although "son of the soil has been used and explained in Zimbabwe, it does not carry the exact same meaning in the South African context. The South Africans are courteous to include females in the situation. There is also a belief, like in the Zimbabwean situation, of God's involvement in the land giving. Mafeka (1988:89) acknowledges this point:

Land is the gift of God to people.. all land. It is not like a house.
A house is made of man's things. Land is not for sale. It is like air.
I would not pay shillings for it. The land is my blanket. I wear it
like my ancestors....let me tell you how my ancestors wore the land
and how the blanket was taken from them as it was taken from me.

Land belongs to the black people who were living here long before the settlers came.

The expression of a blanket helps the reader to realise how much the people were robbed of their land. I imagine someone snatching a blanket from me on a very cold night. This is what it must have felt like for the ancestors and the impact is also felt by the children who are born in the blanket-less situation. Mosama (in Gillan 1996:62) had this to say about the importance of land to the South Africans.⁶

We affirm that land is integrally a part of individual, family and community life.. the history and identity of our people are intimately bound up with the land, and therefore our history and self-understanding becomes meaningful only when they are related to our land .

The fact that the land issue is so complex, difficult, and emotion-laden is found in both Zimbabwe and South Africa , and for that reason, the authorities would rather wait for a more opportune time to deal with it. There is always a more pressing issue to be considered and a little more time needed to handle it. (Gillan 1996:22). South Africa needs to learn from Zimbabwe that waiting a little while longer is what has taken us twenty-one years and we are not even half-way.

4.8 Church and Land

“When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we (Blacks) had the land. The white man said to us ‘let us pray’. After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible”(Scriptura 2000:141). This is a very famous anecdote even in Zimbabwe, however, it needs to be modified to take care of those people who somehow were able to get the Bible and share the land with the ‘white man’.⁷

⁶ This was said at the Restenburg Conference held in 1960. It was very well attended by Church leaders.

⁷ There has been a contradiction in that some say that the church owns thousands of hectare of land. It is true that the Church owns land both in Zimbabwe and South Africa, but may not be true that we remained with the Bible.

In Zimbabwe, the only time I have heard of the ownership of land by the churches is when the vice president was announcing that church land was to be left alone by the land occupiers. In church circles, the issue is not a topic for discussion. Failure to talk about church land does not make it disappear. We will still have to come to terms with the situation. In South Africa, it is totally the opposite. As it appears, everyone is interested in the land that belongs to the different church organizations.

In South Africa, there is an argument that poverty is a product of colonialism and the historical path of capitalistic economic growth. Since the Church acquired its land through colonial and capitalist processes, the Church may be seen to owe it to the poor to participate in the struggle for socio-economic justice, particularly through the donation or effective utilization of its land for the benefit of communities who work and reside on Church land (Gillan 1998:4). The church has an obligation to improve the condition of the poor. At one point the church leaders agreed that the way forward, for them, with respect to the ownership and utilization of Church land was, “a way back, back to what has been left behind in successive eras of dispossession but which is still there inviting us to return, to come home” (Gillan 1998:185). They figured that they needed to go back to the drawing board where it all started and that is where it would be finished.

While in Zimbabwe, the Church has been silent about the land issue for obvious reasons, but the South African church has not been silent for statements like, “We consequently commit ourselves to restoring the land owned by our churches to the original fruitfulness and to make it available for settlement of people who have been dispossessed,” have been reported. (Gillan 1998:4)⁸

Redistribution of land in a post-apartheid *and in a postcolonial (italics mine)* society is both necessary and inevitable. The Church has an excellent opportunity for anticipating that redistribution (Gillan 1998:21). Whether it is in South Africa or Zimbabwe, land

⁸ This was said by the ecumenical movement in 1980 in a bid to show the world and the apartheid government concern of the forced removals. They also meant to challenge the concerned churches to open their land to landless communities.

must be redistributed as long as there is a need to do so. Among the strides made by the Church in South Africa includes the 1998 meeting that was held by Church leaders to conduct an audit of Church land and to set up an ecumenical commission on Church land. This is indicative of the fact that the Church is ready to “enter less convenient, difficult, narrow pathways for the sake of restitution, redistribution, reconciliation and development” (Gillan 1998:21).

4.9.6 Displacement

Looking back at the history of the displacement and colonization, one sees many similarities in the situations of both countries. The South African people have been treated unfairly on many occasions and one such occasion is the Bakubung resettlement area which was sold to the owner of a Sun City to be developed into a golf course for the Lost City Complex. Many Black communities were forcibly removed from their land to make way for nature reserves and game parks. It is not a surprise that the people interpreted it as ‘putting animals ahead of people.’

Both Zimbabweans and South Africans have had much to go through leading to where the situation is today. Between 1970 and 1979 about a million black South Africans were forcibly removed from their places of belonging and, as part of the apartheid government’s homeland policy, were scattered and resettled either in the often barren and arid ‘homelands’ or in peri-urban areas and townships Frochtling (in Gillan 1998:15). Desmond Tutu (in Gillan 1998:15) has repeatedly given reports of what he witnessed at one of the homelands where people were placed in very crowded conditions. He met a little girl who lived with her widowed mother and her sister and the following dialogue is said to have ensued:⁹

“Does your mother receive any pension or any other grant?”

“No”

“Then how do you live?”

⁹ The dialogue recorded here was originally in reported speech.

“We borrow food,”

“What happens if you cannot borrow food?”

“We drink water to fill our stomachs.”

To think that this is life for some people and has been so for years is just unbelievable. How can people with a conscience continue to look on at this kind of suffering? It matters not for how long. For some people, this is their life.

The Zimbabwean equivalence of the ‘homeland’¹⁰ is perhaps the African purchase areas; 61% of which were located in low rainfall areas, 21% in medium rainfall areas and the rest in high rainfall areas (Shutt 1997:555-556). The passing of land acts is one thing the two countries have in common. The South Africans had the Natives Land Act passed in 1913 in which 94% of the land surface was designated as being ‘white’ and only 6% for the Black South Africans (Gillan 1996:39). Following this was the invasion of the land by the people, which the white government and the white people considered as illegal. Zimbabwe has not been spared of this act either, for several of the acts were passed in the time of displacement.

The situation as it stands in both Zimbabwe and South Africa calls for a theological reflection of the land issue. Now that we have more information, it should help us to make a reflection upon something that we have an idea about it. Zimbabwe and South Africa have a lot more in common than a lot of people have anticipated. However it is the differences, although not more than the similarities, those are more striking. South Africa has a lot to learn from Zimbabwe than vice versa, because Zimbabwe is almost at the end of its road in the land distribution. South Africa, no doubt, has done many things well and hopefully they will remember to learn from other people’s mistakes, realising that they will not live long enough to make all the mistakes themselves. Whether it is in Zimbabwe or in South Africa, the laws that were passed gave an advantage to the white people (Mail&Guardian 1997:1). According to the Guardian, the blacks were removed from the arable lands to find themselves working in the White man’s factories or farms.

¹⁰ While the two countries share a lot in common, one will observe that in a lot of situations, the terminology that is used for the situations in each country will differ.

CHAPTER 5

THE LAND ISSUE AND MISSIOLOGY

5.1 Personal reflections

As seen in my own experience, I hesitate to extend my two-roomed house because I am not sure about the future of the one hundred square metre-piece of land which my father allocated to me. I cannot have a place, which I call my own. Without this very important resource, I feel lost and without a means for production and livelihood. I feel robbed, especially with the information that I have now about the minority of the population having the lion's share in the distribution of land. I have held a teaching job for ten years now and I have hardly produced anything out of it. My main achievements have been marrying a wife, building a two-roomed house at home and buying a 78 model VW car. As I look at this and compare it with some people who have had access to land, I feel like I have been ripped off. Some people have big houses in town and they drive the latest models of cars all because they have had access to the land. They earn up to five million dollars per year compared to mine. There is no doubt as to the land being the source of livelihood in Zimbabwe.

5.2 Biblical Considerations

5.2.1 Land As A Symbol Of God's Caring, Providing And Giving Nature

From Genesis to Malachi we see reference to the land, and this is an indication that God is interested in the land, whether in Egypt in the wilderness or in the Canaan or in Zimbabwe or any other place. The Old Testament shows the story of land. It could be about the promise of land not yet given, retention of land now possessed, or land-loss because of covenant breaking (Brueggemann 1977:188). The Old Testament, then, from this perspective, is the story of a broad egalitarian revolution which in large part was oriented toward land reform (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:6).

When we look at our situation of landlessness in Zimbabwe, it would appear like we are the very first people to ever experience it, yet as we look at the Old Testament we see an example of a nation that was without land. The Israelites were without land and just like in our case, looked forward to a day when they would own land. We will trace the history of the Israelites' landlessness and at the same time look at God's attitude towards their situation. Hopefully, this will help to see that we are not the first to experience this evil and if there was hope for Israel there has got to be hope for Zimbabwe. The story of the Israelites and land helps us to see the way their situation affected them and how they affected it, but most importantly it helps us to see how God was involved in it, and we can see what His attitude is towards land distribution.

We see in Israel, people that are determined to wait their turn in the share of the land. Brueggemann (1977:7) refers to them as the people of sojourn.¹ We also cannot fail to see the power of anticipation which was rooted in the speech of God and which overwhelmed the power of expulsion (Brueggemann 1977:16). It appears the expulsion aspect of Israel and the land is signalled by their move out of the land into Egypt because of famine and climaxed when they were taken into exile. We see them at this time as people without a land, people, who in the case of Abraham, had to buy a piece of land for the purposes of burial. We see them again at a later stage taking possession of the land that was theirs and having to fight for it. For Zimbabwe, the physical war has been fought and was won and what we are left with is a strategic/psychological war where we should be able to claim ruling power and economic power as well. This will not happen until we have access to the land.

It helps to see the hope that Israel had for the promised land, which perhaps hinged on the promise for rest even as shown in Hebrews 3-4. They were travellers and got tired along the way, but they laboured knowing that help was on the way and that they would soon rest. The fact that there is reference here to the entry of God's people into the land shows

¹ "Sojourner" is a technical word usually described as "resident alien" (Brueggemann 1977:7). Like the Zimbabweans the Israelites were in their own land yet they were strangers. It required faith, as much as it does today, to realize that though sojourners but they would rightfully occupy the land some day.

us God's desire that people occupy the land, which is what God requires of the people-to have access to the land. If we all acknowledged God's involvement in the land issue, nobody would have any good reason to boast about land which he or she possesses, for as Brueggemann (1977:183), says, " Paul affirms what the whole history of land is finally about: 'What have thou that you did not receive if then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?'" It takes acknowledgement to the fact that every good and perfect gift comes from God for one to realize that what one has is from God, even the land. It is with the realization that land comes from God and belongs to God that people will be willing to share it, knowing that the same God who entrusted the land to them expects them to be responsible with it to the extend of sharing it with the less fortunate.

Another way in which we see God's providence is that of the wilderness wanderings which according to Brueggemann (1977:28) are a surprise to Israel, for that was not the promise of Exodus. The deliverance rhetoric of Exodus talks rather of going out of Egypt and into the land. In their case it should be well understood that the time frame was not given. It appeared it would be just from Egypt into Canaan. Their predicament is also understandable, for they contributed to the wandering. Part of their contribution to losing the land is expressed by Brueggemann (1977:15) when he says, "successively, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his family, and finally the folks at Babel do everything they can to lose the land, and they eventually do." It is not as if they knew the end result, but whether they knew or not, the result is all the same, they lost the land. Who knows what would have happened had they believed God into obedience by entering the land. They, not God, landed themselves into the situation they were in. The situation is referred to as being "formless and therefore lifeless," (Brueggemann 1977:29). To be in the wilderness is, being not merely a resident alien, as were the fathers, but in a hostile and destructive context. As we look at our situation, it looks different from that of Israel from a distance, but upon taking a closer look, it is virtually the same situation. What better term can describe one who is a stranger in one's own land than the expression resident alien?

The God whose arm is not too short to save or ear too dull to hear (Isaiah 59:2) was readily available to help his own. Even in the wasteland of the wilderness, God remained faithful to Israel, for he continued to care for them. The place without life support became the place of "abundance and security" (Brueggemann 1977:34). This is the place which Andelson and Dawsey (1992:3), observed to have been from Egypt to the Wasteland and where the Israelites managed to make a living with difficulty for forty years, all the while longing for the day when they were to cross the Jordan and become caretakers of their birthright, the land which God had promised. As they were in their time of trial and tribulation of the wilderness some people in this "Wasteland" were so beaten down that, understandably, they viewed the Promised Land as an idle dream beyond the real of the possible (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:2). At one point we see the Israelites in their state of landlessness and in a bad mood. Israel remembers wilderness landlessness as a place of murmur, protest, and quarrelsome dissatisfaction (Brueggemann 1977:30). The Israelites had land in the wilderness although it was "wasteland". Therefore at every important point of Israel's life, God provided with them with land. Those of us who are without land can identify with the Israelites and can understand their murmuring and everything that went with it. Perhaps we can be different from them as we realise that the God who promised them land, starting with Abraham, fulfilled His promise in the end.

Furthermore, the Lord put in place yet another principle to protect the Israelites from potential parasites and perhaps from themselves again. This was in form of the Jubilee². In the jubilee idea we see a God who is concerned about his people and their well being. Fager (1993:88) says that the jubilee was a countermeasure to a system that provided wealth for a few at the expense of many. It attempted to restrict the latifundism³ which was prevalent in ancient Near East in order to keep the means of production evenly distributed among independent families. There existed among them an unfair system

² The jubilee's insistence that Yahweh is the owner of all the land.

³ Latifundialization is here used to describe a situation where large landholdings are insufficiently used (EDICISA NEWS: 2001:16), a situation which is condemned by the Church as a the expression of a socially irresponsible use of the right to property and as an obstacle to social mobility.

which limited production and promoted uneven sharing of resources. It is in that light, therefore, that we conclude that the jubilee is strictly agrarian legislation whose sole aim is to affect the distribution of land that produces food, that is, land that forms the basis of survival (Fager 1993:89). The jubilee had people's interest at heart just like its designer did. It was not selective and worked for everybody. Thus, land could not be sold in perpetuity. It could not be treated as an absolute possession by the Israelites, who were simply visitors in His land (Lev. 25:23). All this was done by God to protect his people against all forms of oppression and exploitation in regard to the land from which everyone was to benefit and not just a few individuals. Brueggemann (in Sojourners 1986:28) contends that in affirming that the land belongs only to God, Israel's faith means to deny ultimate ownership to any other. No pretender or other claimant, no matter how strong or legitimate, may usurp this right of ultimate disposal. This points to a people who were so sure about their stand in as far as land was concerned, not to say that they were always so grounded in their belief.

The Jubilee legislation clearly implies a sense of mutual responsibility that went beyond today's notion of 'charity'. Instead it stated, 'we are all in this together, and we all suffer if one of us suffers'. This system did not allow the displacement of families or individuals from their land, for the Jubilee implies that individual families were allotted particular plots of land from which they could not be alienated (Fager 1993:90). Andelson & Dawsey (1992:83), concur with Fager, for they refer to the same when they say that the Jubilee assured conservation of equal rights of every family to the use of the land which would be conserved from generation to generation. The Jubilee does deal with individual rights; it does not so subordinate the individual to the community as to sacrifice the welfare of the individual for the good of the group.

The Jubilee, in a way, tended to protect the people from an unfair system where, if they experienced a bad year and they fell into debt, the collateral for which would be their land; but even in good years, they were able merely to maintain themselves, and they could not extricate themselves from the cycle of debt (Fager 1993:93). Beautiful as it

sounds, it would be sad if we focused our attention on the Jubilee instead of its designer-God. Thus, the Jubilee came into existence in a context where small farms were constantly vulnerable to being absorbed into the large holdings of wealthy creditors, creating a class of landless peasants dependent on the hiring practices of the wealthy for their survival. It was because of these injustices that existed that we see the prophets being involved. We see people overlooking the boundaries that God placed among them, hence the need for God to speak to them through his prophets.

5.2.2 Women, land and theology

In the Zimbabwean context, women have been sidelined in as far as land is concerned. Women have been looked upon as second-class citizens. They have been regarded as property. It would, therefore, make sense that men do not expect women to take possession of land, for how can one piece of property possess another. According to Maposa (1995:132-133), 98% of the married men in the WILSA project have permits while only 2% of the married women have the permits. One man was quoted as saying, "Not when I paid seven beasts for her. She is my property, how can she have right of her own." As if to say that once a woman is married she ceases to be a human being and becomes an item of possession. Tradition has crippled our people to this extent. The sad part of the above situation is that it was permissible by the system for women to have permits, but because tradition demands otherwise, it might take quite a while before people get used to women sharing the same platform with men.

5.2.3 The marginalised and theology

5.2.3.1 The poor and theology

The poor people are to be the recipients of the good, the justice, love and kindness that is to be given by those who do not seem to offer much of it at this time. The poor that I am referring to are the poor men, women and children. The group that is most affected is the women who find themselves in charge of children and are sometimes left alone at home by their husbands. To these poor, justice means that they are treated without partiality

and are given what they deserve. It also means that they get vindictive retribution. (Webster 1955:993) One of the purposes of these land laws was to give hope and extend God's benevolence to everyone. A farm was not to be stripped bare during the harvest; gleanings and fallen grapes were to be left for the poor and the sojourner (Lev.19:9-10) (Andelson & Dawsey1992:25).

In as much as the land issue relates so closely with the socio-economic condition of the people, we can see a direct link between the poor and the land. We can, therefore conclude that as Jesus talked about the poor, he also was dealing with the land issue. As observed by the WCC (1980:105) document, "To be poor is to have not, to experience lack and deficiency. In Jesus' words the poor are the 'little ones' (Matt. 11:25), the insignificant people of no consequence. They are powerless, voiceless and at the mercy of the powerful". There exists a belief that food and clothes are unimportant, as if the spiritual world calls for the disregard of warmth and a satisfied belly. To the contrary He affirms, "all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them." (Luke 12:30). Though a list is not given, I believe that if Jesus were to walk the soils of Zimbabwe today and saw the situation, he would tell me, and all who are in the same situation, "your father knows that you need the land." And is it not true, in fact, that all the nations of the world seek this thing-land?

5.3 Missiological reflection on ecology

In Africa, land is viewed with a mystical and spiritual sentiments (Verstraelen 1998:102). I believe that this has in a way helped in the preservation of ecology. The treatment of land with respect because of its mystical and spiritual importance has been greatly affected by the disparity in land ownership between the indigenous people and the settlers. The colonisers who comprised 0.6% of the population apportioned land that was only 675sq. km less than they apportioned to the original owners of the land (Verstraelen 1998:102-103). With or without the sentimental value placed on the land, the Zimbabwean people were placed in a very difficult situation where they had no

choice but to get a livelihood out of the land without worrying about the effect on the revered land. As stated by Maposa (1995:17),

"The communal farmers were in a predicament. Commercial farmers should therefore not accuse the peasantry of causing this environmental carnage, because some of them are partly to blame for hoarding, keeping the majority away from the needed resources."

5.4 The land issue and a hermeneutic of justice

Moreover, to seek justice does not necessarily mean to expect everyone to have the same size of land and have equal share in the country's wealth, which would be wishful thinking. There is need to realise that equity goes beyond seeking equality but instead is about everyone feeling that they are as important as anyone else (Chartered Secretaries 2001:19). It is in the interests of justice that a proposal is made, for the riches of the developed countries should be explained in terms of the poverty of the underdeveloped (WCC1980: 107). All this should be our concern as a Church in Zimbabwe, for as Bakare (1993:68), says, the prophet's task is to read the economic and political signs of the day. His call is to point out that a relationship with God is an ongoing relationship that requires justice for the poor and dispossessed. The prophets often criticized an unjust usage of the land and the gradual establishment of two different classes within Israel. This situation created a few landowners and a majority of landless people. If the 8th century prophets were here today, they would also condemn the accumulation of land that is not necessary for survival, as did Amos (2:6). This should be understandable to anyone, for it is unfair for some people to have land that they do not use at all while others do not have anything at all. There is not even a hint of justice when that happens as it does in Zimbabwe today.

Frochtling (1998:103) observes that the book of Nehemiah demands justice and restoration for the poor of the land. She restates what Nehemiah says, "Restore to them, this very day, their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses

(Nehemiah 5:11)." There is a reflection upon a people that had been displaced from their land. It is never fair or just to take advantage of another person to the extent of robbing them of their possessions, including their land. Jang (Mortensen1993:56) says that *sadek* is a Hebrew word that encompasses the various parts of the challenge, for it refers to both righteousness and justice. We humankind are called to maintain the "rightness" of God's original design by treating the land and all that belong to it with justice. When land is taken from people in unfair circumstances, where there is no agreement for such to take place and the other part is left with no means of survival, then both the land and the person have been deprived of justice.

5.5 The land issue and a hermeneutic of stewardship

The Israelites' laws concerning land and its use ensured an inclusive use, bearing in mind that God is and remains the owner of the land (Frochtling:1998:101). They were to be tenants of the land and not its owners. This has really not changed, for everywhere where people have land, it continues to be the Lord's possession and not theirs. They remain stewards of it. Frochtling(1998:101) goes on to say that the situation in which one is made a steward as in the case above, demands that one be conscious of the responsibility that one has over the landless, the poor and the foreign people, the disadvantaged ones.

The abundance of the land comes only with the recognition that the earth is the Lord's, otherwise we continue in the Wasteland (Andelson & Dawsey1992: 24) We really have no other good reason to distribute the land equally if we do not realise that it belongs to God who desires that everyone be satisfied from the land. In the Bible, the Promised Land is characterised by the "eminent domain" of God. Thus, after the forty years in the Wasteland, when a new generation finally entered into the land across the Jordan, Joshua reminded the people of how the Lord had given them the land with the fruit of the vineyards and olive groves, and he then made a covenant before them with God, saying "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:13-15) (Andelson & Dawsey1992:23). We need constant reminders that land has not always been ours, but it

was entrusted to us by God who expects us to use it wisely. When He gave it, it was meant for every Zimbabwean and to everyone it should go.

In the story of the talents, from one who was given one to the one who was given five, we see a fair God who gives each person according to ability and expects each person to use the talent. Land is the same way. Everyone should have access (we can not all get the same amount of it) and should utilize it accordingly. We all are expected to give an account of how we will have used this land.

Some Christians will argue that they can choose to or not to be involved in the land issue in Zimbabwe, but surely, nobody can seriously object today to the fact that the whole church is sent on mission and that all it does and lives has to be seen as part of its calling-worship, parish life, diaconia, development, pastoral work, catechetical instruction, intervention in political life, etc (WCC1980:xiv). Every area of Church activities is a reflection of how serious the Church is about the mission of God, *missio dei*. How the Church treats the issue of land in Zimbabwe is a reflection of their understanding of the mission of God. For the people of Zimbabwe, there seems to be no other way. There is no way we can ignore the people's physical plight regarding land and at the same time seem to be interested in their spiritual well-being. The church should realise that God takes mission seriously and when we look at a holistic approach to ministry, we look at such deeds of good will. While it is true that what we see in mission is the church at work, mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God (Bosch 1991:390). If we claim to be children of God, we must believe his heart's concerns and take them seriously as he would have us do. According to Bosch, the church is called to minister to human need in whatever circumstances and forms it appears, and to insist that all be done with justice. In its social witness, the Church must be cognizant of all attitudes, forces, policies and laws, which affect the life of a people (in Saayman 1991:75). If we pay attention to all aspects of people's lives, we can win them into the kingdom, for they might not care how much we know about their lostness until they know how much we care about their condition. There should be realisation that the whole gospel must witness to all realms of life-physical, social, economic, and spiritual

(Bevans and Scherer 1994:127). There has been focus on the spiritual for a long time, yet there was to be realisation of the link between the spiritual and each of the others. What we are faced with here is all of the four realms included in the situation of the land distribution in Zimbabwe.

5.6 Missiology and the socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe.

5.6.1 Culture, land and theology

In Zimbabwe, the land is regarded as having some cultural value. It is important to have an understanding of this cultural aspect of the land issue if we are to understand and make them understand the theological connection with the land. To the African people, needless to say that the Zimbabweans are included, land is the giver of life. It is not a commodity that may be owned; hence its ownership is very complicated (Makue1998:18).

The Zimbabweans regard the land as being sacred, as holy property. The relationship that exists between a mother and a child is the same one that is supposed to exist between the land and the people. There is a permanent bond between the mother and her child (Bakare 1993:72). The land is so regarded because it, like the human mother, gives protection, enjoyment, and provides for our economic, social and religious needs (Bakare 1993:73). It would follow then that a people without land are an orphaned people. Lilburne (in Bakare: 1993:73) goes to the extent of saying that the land is the source of people's life and substance.

It seems the most important belief that the Zimbabwean people have about the land is that it is a gift from God (Bakare 1993:73). The Zimbabwe people believe that just as the mother cannot be monopolised by one of the many children that she may have, the land is for the community and not for an individual. The people also believe that what one has belongs to everyone else and what we have we share. In the light of this beautiful phenomenon, we should be surprised to find some among us who have been so colonised

as to forget what they stand for. They do this by amassing vast pieces of land that they really do not have use for, while others are dying because of shortage of land.

5.6.2 Government and land

The government of Zimbabwe, I believe had the land issue ringing at the back of their minds as seen by some of the actions that they took. At independence they changed the terminology that was used for the land tenure systems. The original individual tenure, Tribal Trust Land and African Purchase Areas were nominally changed to Large-Scale Commercial Farms, Communal lands and Small-Scale Commercial Farms respectively (Verstraelen 1998:103). This and many other actions that were taken shows how the government tried with little success to remedy the existing inequalities. This is seen in the almost insignificant efforts that were made to redress the issue. Prior to 2000 there were a few strides that were made in the direction of land distribution. A lot of what we see happening is land being given to a few individuals including those in government who had access to loan facilities. They were able to acquire land for themselves and their families. Again we do not see that concern for the people, which is to lead to justice for all. The government is supposed to be the provider of the inhabitants of any given country. The President, Mr. Mugabe, said, "People will seize the land if we do not proceed with the Bill now [the Land Acquisition Act, 1992] and we will not be able to move them" (Maposa 1995:17). I find it interesting that the government would say this. It would seem that there was an attempt to incite the people into undesirable action. Having heard this, I am sure that the war veterans and the land hungry people kept it at the back of their minds. Should it then surprise anyone that some eight years later, the war veterans invaded farms and took control of them? What is most interesting is that no one was able to move them. Was this fulfilment of prophecy, or is it self-fulfilment of one's prophecy?

Had it not be for the war veterans, I wonder where we would be today. The government actually acknowledges that the war vets jolted them into serious action as far as the land issue is concerned.

According to our culture, the government is responsible for providing land to its people. When a man becomes of age, he approaches the head man who is supposed to show him a piece of land which he can transform into a home, comprising houses fields, cattle pens and the like. For one reason or another, the government has not been able to fulfil this role adequately.

Unlike in our situation where not much is said about the prevailing unfavourable state of affairs, the prophets condemned the ruling class for the exploitation and oppression of the powerless and the poor (Micah 3:3-12). By their self-serving use of power, the ruling class, who reside in the cities, dispossessed the peasants of as much as 70% to 80% of their agricultural produce (Bakare 1993:5). Mbeki (2000:219) says the government ministers were involved in giving land that was meant for the poor to leading politicians and their relatives. The major criticism of the ruling class by the 8th century prophets was their inability to maintain justice. Justice is the basis of law and to do justice to the landless is to defend their cause (Amos 2:7) The prophets were the mouthpiece of God and had a message for the day, they could not be quietened. The 8th century prophets revealed the mechanisms of dispossession which led to the impoverishment of Israel's peasant community and the loss of land on the one hand (JOTFSA 1990:59).

5.6.3 A protracted struggle for land: Colonial land grabbers, the armed struggle

With the coming of the white colonialists who are the true land grabbers,⁴ and the introduction of the 'freehold' concept, the colonialists gave land ownership to individual settlers leaving the African with very little land (Bakare 1993:73). We see here a selfish action taken in the decision that was made. We do not see a hint of justice, mercy or the love that every human being is supposed to have been taught by God himself. The colonizers must have had knowledge of how the people related to their land, but all that was ignored, as all they wanted was land. The colonisers and the missionaries that

⁴ Although the people who occupied farms illogically are said to be land grabbers, the true land grabbers are the first people to grab the land from its rightful owners, the people of Zimbabwe.

accompanied them failed to appreciate the dynamic relationship between African people and land (Makue 1998:185). What is even more sad is the fact that the neo-colonialists have also failed to acknowledge this link between the sons of the soil and the soil.

Within the Zimbabwean culture there is the understanding that one does not take anyone's possession without seeking permission to do so. It used to be that one could easily lose an arm as a result of stealing. When the colonizers came and grabbed our land they were going against our culture and they must have been going against theirs as well. In our culture anyone who violates a fundamental principle must pay recompense of some sort. The Zimbabwean did not just look on as their land was taken away from them, but like the Israelites, they fought for their land, which amounted to the armed struggle for land. From the early seventies to 1980 when independence finally came, there was a war that was fought for the land to be given back to the rightful people.

As the Zimbabweans fought for their land, they believed that God was on their side, especially since they believed that God is the one who gave them the land. The oppression of the white minority was not only unjust, but also unreasonable. They are the type of people Frochtling (1998:99) refers to when she says that, "Oppressors do not belong to, are not at home in God's objectives for this world." She uses the story of Cain and Abel to illustrate the point. Cain oppressed his brother and as a result hampered the relationship between him and the land and between him and God.

5.6.4 The War Veterans and the Land Issue

Our culture acknowledges different roles played by different people. There are those who are gifted in farming, hunting and so forth. There are also those who are gifted soldiers. The war veterans have been recognized as gifted in the area of fighting and have gained fame for the role they played. It must be acknowledged that the war veterans played an important role, first in the armed struggle for land and later on in getting the government to think seriously about land. After sacrificing their lives in a war of liberation and realising that nothing was being done to better their situation regarding the land, they had

to start another war which has been termed the third Chimurenga⁵. This they did by illegally occupying the white- owned farms. Noble as the idea may sound, but some of the things that accompanied it were not quite as noble. People were maimed, some were raped and yet others were killed in the occupation of farms. The war veterans promoted justice and demoted it at the same time. Some people will argue that it is better for a few people to die so that many may be saved. However, did the few people who died need to die at all? The process of land redistribution could have gone on without people's death.

Land in Zimbabwe is to be seen as having a relationship with Missiology, for we see a number of areas of land showing a link with the mission of God. God's liberating presence can be seen in the land issue. God's involvement in the issue of land has been noted and it is the same involvement that we see in the situation in Zimbabwe. The same God who was involved with Israel, who showed concern for the marginalized people and who has provided through land is the same one who wills that the land issue in Zimbabwe be what it is to be in promotion for justice. This only happens as people realise that they are only stewards of the land, entrusted for the well-being of everyone.

⁵ Chimurenga was a term used for war to mean armed struggle. If the term is to be used again in the context of land redistribution it shows people who are prepared to fight for their right to the land.

CHAPTER 6

THE WAY FORWARD IN DEALING WITH THE LAND ISSUE IN ZIMBABWE

In the light of what we discussed in chapters three to five, we now evaluate and give suggestions on the way forward. The purpose of looking through the land issue in Zimbabwe by way of analysis and reflection has been to better understand it and see how it can be dealt with in a way that promotes the mission of God. Kritzinger (1988:60) says the following about Christian mission:

Christian mission is always concerned about discovering God's liberating presence in every human situation then whatever strategies are planned will lead us to discover the meaning of that gospel in each specific context.

This chapter seeks to show how God can make a difference in the Zimbabwean situation. It seeks to show the meaning of the gospel in our context. This chapter also deals with the strategy for mission and utilises the last stage of the praxis circle. It looks at what is to be done for the marginalized people especially women and the poor in our society. It also looks at the environment from a faith perspective as regards the land issue in Zimbabwe. The question to be addressed is treatment of the environment, despite the use of the land in the situation in Zimbabwe. The chapter also looks at the role of the Church in dealing with the following: reconciliation, the landed, and land. The mission of the Church is another issue that this chapter addresses. It looks at what the Church is supposed to do in dealing with this issue. Finally, the chapter deals with the issue of the land as an issue in and for mission.

6.1 The preferential treatment of women

Women have been subject to inferiority from as far back as the Old Testament times. We see focus being placed on men and only a few women are mentioned as having done anything noteworthy.

Women are oppressed in many ways. They should be given the room they need to do what they can do best, regardless of their gender. The church should show the way to the world, since we are the salt of the earth. God clearly acts for the helpless-the lame, the blind, the sick, women, and children (Andelson and Dawsey 1992:35). This goes to show that women are more important than a lot of people realise. They are worthy of God's attention and therefore worthy of ours. The practice of Christianity is shown in the identity of a Christian within a culture, as that culture is understood in terms of social change (Cochrane et al 1991:63). In a culture like ours, one can easily show one's identity in regard to the way one treats women.

We shall look at the story of the woman at the well as recorded in John 4. The disciples must have wondered what Jesus was doing in talking to someone of the opposite sex. Jesus must have been demonstrating to them that women were people like everyone else and were worthy of his attention, theirs and ours. We need to allow women to have access to land even to the extent of a right to the ownership of land. We are to give them freedom to be what they can be as shown in their hard work which has been demonstrated over the years. They have proven that they have more right to the land than do men, for they are the ones who work the land and produce from it. We must find out what their desire is, regarding the land, and grant them just that if it is possible.

6.2 The preferential treatment of the poor

Jesus seems to have taken special consideration of women and the poor, and it would not be a bad idea if we give them the same preferential treatment. Besides, it is only fair that they finally receive some attention after a long time of marginalization.

The challenge that was given at San Antonio is to be given to people of our day with the hope that they will realise how unfair the situation is:

Lest we be too presumptuous or sentimental, all of us here
at San Antonio are rich. We will eat today; the poor will
not. We know where we will sleep tonight; the homeless

do not. Competent medical assistance is nearby;
for the poor it hardly exists (Wilson 1990:119).

Realising that the situation at hand in Zimbabwe has created a society of poor people, we need to deal with that as well if we are to deal with the land issue holistically. The poor are the 'little ones (Matt. 11:25), the "insignificant people of no consequence. They are powerless, voiceless and at the mercy of the powerful" (WCC1980:173). This is not to say that the poor can be taken care of without any problems, for it appears that those in the Church who have chosen to be with the poor in their poverty and in their struggle have found themselves the object of opposition from others in the Church and from the government. What is required from the churches is a missionary movement that supports what they have already begun, and that focuses on building evangelising and witnessing communities of the poor that will discover our expressions of faith among the masses of the poor and oppressed (WCC1980:177). The landless people are almost synonymous with the poor. They usually seem to stand for the landless and economically deprived. The poor might not necessarily be landless and vice versa, but these two groups are closely related. (Habel 1995:28). As Andelson and Dawsey (1992:104) say it well:

The fullness of God will flourish only when the outward liberation exhibited by the ascent of the poor to the material level of bourgeois existence becomes an inward liberation.

There is no immediate need to worry about the poor reaching the level of bourgeois as such, unless they do not refer even to middle class person. The suffering people would be happy with a meal on the table and a roof over their head. All the same, God is concerned about the physical well being of the poor even as he is of their spiritual needs. The good news is not that the poor are blessed but are identified as heirs of the land (Brueggemann 1977:193). Realisation that the poor need land will help those who can provide.

The Church's relationship to the outcasts of society is seen in a way that does not challenge the status quo of those who are already powerful: "the rich will be called upon to aid in the cause of the poor but without necessarily requiring a change in social class practices" (Andelson & Dawsey 1992: 31). The goal should not be to make the rich poor

or vice versa, but should be to allow the poor a chance, through access to land, which they never had. At the same time the rich will continue to be rich. At the end of the day it will be good news for everyone.

6.3 The environment from a faith perspective

In Zimbabwe land is the livelihood of the people and without it there would not be much to live on. Almost 70 percent of the population depends on farming as a source of subsistence and income, and one-quarter of all wage employment is in the agricultural sector. Anyone who lives in Zimbabwe would better treat the land seriously and as for Christians, we have a better reason than the rest to treat the environment in a responsible way. We have the environment given by God and as stewards we ought to treat it as people who will give an account for the things we will have done in relation to land. As individual Christians we ought to be playing our role in preserving the environment, but maybe the question to be asked is, "What is the role of the Church in all this?"

Members of the community are expected to nurture the land and not to plunder. They are considered to have a mutual relationship like that between a mother and her child, a loving caring relationship. We have a heritage that ought to shape our attitudes and subsequently our actions in regard to land. As many Zimbabweans believe, land is traditionally never linked to individuals (Cochrane et al 1991: 104). The reality of the spirits is not in question here, but the ideas that the people hold, which if followed, will go a long way in making a difference for the better in the way we treat the land. In the view of the Shona people, the real 'owners' of the land are the spirit guardians, while ultimately dominion over all the country is in the hands of the high god-Musikavanhu-who is approached to provide rain and good crops (Cochrane et al 1991:104).

One thing that is of much significance about this idea is that it acknowledges God's supremacy over all else, and it leaves people carefully considering how they are to treat the land because of who owns it. There, however needs to be realisation that the winds of change are blowing to a point where people can purchase and own land. As we accept the positive change of land ownership, we should not allow it to imprison us to a point

where we are so possessive as to abandon our rich background. The Zimbabweans need to look out for one another and continue to be conscious of the great Mwari who owns the land and whose desire is to have us share the land.

There should be constant reminders of whose the land is and there should always be promotion of environment preservation. People need to be educated about the importance and significance of the environment leading to the good treatment of the same. The Church, especially, needs to demonstrate to the world about the way the environment is to be treated.

6.4 The role of the church in the land issue in Zimbabwe

6.4.1 Role as representatives of God

The Church is a representative of God on earth and She is supposed to speak on behalf of God. The Church should show the people the right way, for they are supposed to be the light of the world. They are to point out the will of God to the people who hold on to land and to share words of hope for those who are yet without land. The Church is to promote peace and justice in all the dealings regarding land redistribution. The Church needs to do everything within her power, so that everyone benefits in this dilemma.

The Zimbabweans, naturally, are opposed to the present situation in which the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer. This goes for the church community as well. However, among the Christians, we have not heard much opinion expressed except perhaps from the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference that is a well-known group in the country and hereafter referred to as ZCBC. They represent the thinking of the Church in the country. They say that the social doctrine of the Church condemns large land holdings as "criminal and against God's will and plan of salvation" (ZCBC NEWS:8).

The Zimbabwe Christian Council (ZCC) is yet another group that has voiced an opinion on the situation, but has not said enough. As Verstraelen (1998:105) says, the ZCC¹ is rather future-oriented, looking forward to eliminating poverty and creating a better world in the name of the Gospel. They do not seem to see the land issue in the same way as many do. There is no way they can talk about poverty elimination without addressing the land issue, for it appears that is where the answer lies.

This is what the prophets of Israel spoke against and is discernible today in many parts of the world and also in Zimbabwe (Verstraelen 1998:106). We can ask a big question about where the Christians of this nation were when all this was happening, yet we could be asked this question, "Where are the prophets of this generation, as all this continues to happen?" Bevans (1994:162) points out that the missionary must always be a prophet of God's purposes and of God's gospel. Bevans goes on to say, "In season, out of season, despite opposition, derision, and persecution, the prophet is the one who discerns the meaning of daily events and speaks God's word to God's people." Usually it is those who are doing what is right that seem to be criticised the most. We are never to give up especially when we know that what we are doing is right. Like the apostles in Acts, we should rather obey God than man and speak what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20). Even Cochrane et al (1991:70) agree with the same:

doing justice is the dominant ethical and political theme of the prophetic trajectory of the Old Testament, it is also a theme that was a key part of the Lord Jesus' ministry and teaching .

We are all supposed to play the role of God's messengers, for gone are the days when the missionary was supposed to be the westerner preaching the Good News to the third world nations.

¹ In Zimbabwe these acronyms are used to represent a myriad of things, but in this chapter they are going to mean the Zimbabwe Christian Council.

Judging from what a lot of people say, there are some who want to believe that land is for the black Zimbabweans and for no one else, regardless of what they call themselves. As Sugden & Wright (1990:62) put it across, sometimes the Gospel frankly opposes the cherished beliefs of a people. The Maasai, for example, believe that all the cattle in the world belong to them, and that they are the one and only people in the world endowed by God with the grace of owning cattle. What then would happen to all our brothers and sisters who are in some parts of the world if they did not have a right to certain things because they are not citizens of the countries they are in? What Verstraelen (1998:30) says makes sense, “of course, each culture is unique, valid, and dynamic; but each culture is also sinful and needs, therefore, the revelation of God in Christ.” God is the one who created us with our dynamic cultures, but we need to be respecters of other people and above all, of our Creator. Why should we continue with the same unfair system? The nature of the system is seen in the words of Riddell (1971:5):

throughout practically the whole of Rhodesia's colonial history, land has been divided up on a racial basis with the colour of a person's skin determining which area of land he could farm and where he could live.

It would have been good if we could say the past is past, but the past continues to hound us as the state of affairs remains. The big question is regarding what the Church can and should do. Newbigin (1989:124) says that the church has a major role to play in all this, for it is viewed as a light of the world. The church has become increasingly recognisable as a universal community in which all cultures can be welcomed.

6.4.2 In dealing with the land

Bakare (1993:34) proposed that individuals should own land which they can use adequately for the benefit of the community; and that individuals who own more than 400 hectares should be charged high land taxes, those who are professionally trained in agriculture should have land leased to them in order to produce food for the nation. The traditional peasant farmers, who have to this day been left behind in modern farming methods by previous colonial regimes, should be given training by agricultural extension

officers and no family should own farm land in perpetuity. There is no doubt that we will have applied force to those who have land to act. The situation would be a better one if people were to volunteer to give away some of their land.

The prophets like Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah link the cause of justice to the landless peasantry. They pronounce Judgement against the king and his officials for not distributing God's gift of land to his people in a just way. "Land will not be sold absolutely, for the land belongs to me, and you are only strangers and guests of mine" (Lev 25:23). Bevans (1994:162-163) echoes the same words when he says, "Such were Jeremiah and Amos and Isaiah and Hosea; such was the Lord Jesus; and such must be the church, missionary by its very nature." It is clear as to what the Church, as the contemporary prophet, should do. We should speak out against injustices. We should stop pretending that we do not see eight people are crammed on a 1.5-acre land with only 3.5 hectares for their farming. We must speak out against the individuals who have over 4000 hectares, which are hardly used. We must confront a government that is reluctant to meet the needs of their people. A government that satisfies the needs of its officials while the majority of the people are in abject poverty has to be advised.

While it is true that God created land for use by man, we need to realise that it remains His and we are to be stewards of this precious resource. How we distribute it should be a matter of concern to the one who created and owns it. As stewards of God's resources, our partnership must extend to sharing skills and resources which God has given for the benefit of all, not only to extend his kingdom evangelistically but also to combat the sufferings and evils of poverty (Sugden & Wright 1990:176). Land is there to be shared between brothers and sisters, and not to be hoarded for self-security. It belongs to the community and beyond this communal ownership of land, the Zimbabwean tradition recognises the Musikavanhu as the only ultimate owner of creation.

6.4.3 The Church's obligation to the landed

"If the rich go on exploiting the poor, we are talking about cannibalism. If the rich go on ignoring the poor, absolute violence will be the music to such deafness" (Sheepers

2000:14). While it is true that the church should not support the status quo by neglecting the landless people in Zimbabwe, it should also be true that the Church should deal with those who have land. It does not look like much will happen if the church only focuses on the landless, for it is those who have land who are supposed to release the land for use by the poor. The primary objective of a land reform programme should be to redress the existing inequitable land distribution (Bakare 1993:65). The sad part is that although others need the land, nobody wants to let go of it. The greatest fear among some of the ones that possess the land is that the tables will be turned upside down and they will lose in the process. They say that justice, if we could start from scratch, might well demand a social order that would disallow private property in land (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:80). Shall people continue to suffer just because some people have some fears and uncertainties about the whole situation? All the same they need to do something about their situation instead of waiting for someone to force change upon them.

For those whose wealth has become for them an idol, the Church should call for voluntary renunciation of some of the wealth. The church should be busy helping the wealthy to do something about the unfair situation, which they see around them everyday.

Concerning whether or not the Church should be involved in issues of land distribution, maybe the first question to be asked is whether the Church still believes in the Promised Land. Andelson & Dawsey (1992:14) have this to say:

The Promised Land could mean many other things, but one thing that it also means, is an end to the causes of oppression. If sin and salvation have a social, corporate dimension, then the Church must be concerned with the structures of society-certainly not excluding the laws and customs concerning the ownership and tenure of land.

We can easily conclude that the Church cannot avoid this issue if we are to continue to be the Church and function as we are supposed to. Among the challenges that we have as a Church is to interpret the laws of the land and help even in shaping them to where they are friendly to the friendless.

It looks like everyone is interested in coming up with a solution that will work for all the parties involved. If this is to happen, it would be a good idea to work on it. Bakare (1993:56) suggests that for the land reform programme to succeed, the elite and the settlers have to shed their greed. Failure to do so will mean the program will remain merely "political rhetoric," and the landless will continue to be impoverished and even slip into greater poverty. It appears that greed has always been the main motive, for if it were not, why would a person or a few individuals hold on to land they will never use? The overwhelming majority of "good" Christians are busy living a kind of Christian spirituality, which does not demand social justice. For the time has come for judgement to begin with the household of God" 1Peter 4:7. The Church needs to remove the log that is in her eye to be in a position to see the speck of dust in the world's eye. We need to put our house in order before we can correct the world. We have to correct the imbalances in the word, but we need to first make sure we are not contributors to the situation.

Christ Jesus visits his Church as the crucified Lord. He wants the Church to have a crucified mind rather than a crusading mind. The crucified mind is not a neurotic mind, but it is a mind ready to accept humiliation in order to save others from humiliation (Koyama 1980:169). It is a strong community-directed mind and a healthy mind. It is strongly asked to follow the crucified Lord instead of running ahead of him. Christ chose the cross when he had the option of commanding thousand of angels to come and fight a war (Matt 26:53) "or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

It would seem that exploitation is the human tendency everywhere in the world. This is shown by the fact that the land issue has not only been an issue in Israel's case or the Zimbabwe situation, it has been seen as a problem in South America as Andelson Dawsey (1992:17) observe that Latin American governments have made relatively few real attempts at rural land reform and virtually none at urban land reform and this has led to the suffering in Latin America today, two hundred years after the movements of independence. The oppression is not exactly the same type as in colonial times, but

people are hungry and too many are unable to provide healthy, decent lives for their children. In Mexico, at one point, .02 percent of the agricultural population were estate owners, and 88.4 percent were landless labourers. All this helps to explain why Mexico's revolution came in 1911 (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:18). Therefore, in the light of this, one thing that needs to be done is to launch a campaign against exploitation and injustice of one person by another. The church needs to do this as well.

It is so unfortunate that it is usually the rich talking about the problems that the poor have, for they cannot begin to understand the real situation. If the two groups were brought together, maybe the discussion could amount to something. The church is not to be partisan in the land issue. What we should aim at is to make a difference. This should be the primary objective of the government, the individual, the white farmer, the war veteran, the church and everyone in Zimbabwe. We have to make this thing work or no one will.

6.4.4 The church and reconciliation

The church should be on the forefront in matters of reconciliation. We are to be the peacemakers who are going to be called children of God. As has been pointed out earlier, blood was shed for the land, and there is no need to continue to shed any more. If only people could realise that two wrongs do not make a right, and that the Zimbabweans stand to win if they refrain from violence.

It has been said that Zimbabwe is the best example of reconciliation ever. At independence, the government decided to adopt a policy of reconciliation. Bakare (1993:58) observes that the reason for the policy was that the white people feared retaliation and were, therefore, reassured that no revenge would be taken against them. The past was to be forgotten and buried, and a new era ushered in which all persons, regardless of colour or creed, would live together equally and in harmony. He goes on to comment that the reconciliation statement may have been genuine, but says that it came from the wronged and not from the wrongdoer, and as a result it benefited the settler more than the dispossessed. After twelve years of independence, it has joined hands with the settlers as it has amassed large tracts of land for itself. Koyama (1980:142) points out

that healing and reconciliation cannot be got so cheap. Some evil powers cannot be cast out except with prayer and fasting; there are others that require organisation and confrontation as well. There seems to emerge here an idea that there should have been much more thought into the reconciliation policy than is evident. Moreover, repentance is a necessary aspect in the process of reconciliation. It involves a change of heart and will arise from sorrow for sin committed and will lead to transformation of life (Amos 5:15). Had the white people initiated the process and taken time to repent about the past, it probably would mean that things would have been better than they are now.

Since the take-over of governmental powers, the policy of reconciliation has benefited white Zimbabweans tremendously (Bakare 1993:63). Genuine reconciliation benefits both parties if it is to be meaningful. Simply to cover up the past, as if it never was, will only succeed in deepening the roots of hostility. True reconciliation involves repentance and restitution before normal relationships can be established. The relationship between Africans and settlers was broken by dispossession, and true reconciliation will be possible only through restitution and a genuine attempt to rectify the injustice (Bakare 1993:63). The process of dispossession should then be reversed by way of redistribution; then and only then can relationships be mended.

The Church is the new Israel, a people of God whose task is to promote love, justice and harmony among people. When Jesus preached in Galilee, the main agricultural province in Palestine, the good news that he preached included meeting the needs of the poor (Lk 4:18). In this new kingdom, which Jesus announces to the rural peasants, there is also a new economic order which is to bring about changes. The hungry are to be filled with good things (Lk 1:53). Good news can only be perceived as good news if it is wholly good. Of what use is a gospel that ignores the physical person in a bid to reach the soul?

6.5 The mission of the Church

The church needs to wake up to the realities of land problems in Zimbabwe. They are staring us right in the face and yet we do not seem to notice what is going on around us. The church has been silent about land distribution and it is high time that she speaks out. We owe a lot to the people of this nation. There is need to realise that mission is more

than proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ; it also has to apply the Gospel to the real problems and challenges facing people (Verstraelen 1998:25).

It is not practical to try to evangelise people who are in such situation without meeting their needs and at the same time making much progress. As the saying goes, "you preach little by what you say, more by what you do and most by what you are," and what we do is an outward demonstration of what we are. As Dr. E.H. Guti² always says, "We preach what we know but produce what we are."

The church can also assist the victims of the systems. Some have become destitute because of shortage of land, and they need assistance. Some have been caught in the crossfire and they need our comfort and sympathy. Some have so much land; they do not know what to do with it. They, too, are to be assisted. We are also called to carry our cross, to suffer for the sake of God's kingdom, and thus identify with Christ in his sufferings (Bosch 1994:80). Sharing what we consider to be rightfully ours will not be easy. If it means that that is our cross, so be it for the sake of the kingdom of God. We are to carry our cross and follow Christ. He left us an example that we should walk in his steps.

We cannot continue to look on as if there were no prophets in the land. I intend to do a little more than I have done. I will write articles to the media pointing out some of the things that have gone wrong and need addressing. I will use every opportunity to speak up where it is called for. Being the Vice-Chairman of the Churches of Christ National Ministers' Fellowship, I can influence my fellow pastors to speak up or even come to a point where we make a public statement. We need to inculcate into the people the fact that violence is not the answer to any problem. Christians praying 'Thy kingdom come' may not realise that the kingdom of God cannot be fully realised in our plural world; they, with others, have to erect signs of that kingdom by promoting truth, justice, charity,

² Ezekiel Guti is the archbishop of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa

love and peace (Verstraelen 1998:49). This concurs with what Henry (1960:1155) has to say in restating Micah 6:8:

That we must do justly, must render to all their due, according as
our relation and obligation to them are; we must do wrong to none,
but do right to all in their bodies, goods and good name.. not only
be just to all we deal with, but kind to all that need us.

This could be said in line with compensation, (be it for the farm or for the developments made on the farm) for land that is to be designated for resettlement. Compensation must reflect the effort, which the former owner put into the land, and enable him to continue being productive for the benefit of the nation (ZCBC News 1997:7). When we talk about fairness and ethics, we really do not talk about the colour of one's skin, but what can be done for human beings. Fellow human beings are to be treated fairly. In addition, the settlers built up a structure of services to provide technical, financial and marketing support to the large-scale white farmers. Although agriculture formed the basis of the economics of both settler and the indigenous people, two different agricultural systems evolved; on the one hand the modern, technological and commercial oriented system of the settlers and on the other subsistence agriculture based on traditional methods (Auret 1990:69). It is obvious that the commercial and colonial farmers took a lead in the production, hence first place in economy. Usually who ever has the dollar- power has the power, so automatically, we see the owners of the land bowing down to the ones who obtained the land. Between 1890-1980, the scenario-economic system of Rhodesia was characterised by gross inequalities, rooted in the unequal distribution of land and the consequent inequality of access to other natural resources. It would have been better if it ended in 1980 when independence came, but it is not like that, for the situation still stands, even twenty years into independence. While we must be careful not to disrupt the economic status of the country, we must strive for justice even economically. Our people need economic liberation and will not get it until they get adequate access to land. The imbalance has to be removed. The whites who control the economy are to be prepared to share the economy with the landless. They are to part with a lot of their land, and we can help in the process. We can help them to see the need to do what is right and we can also

help the landless in their cry for land as we speak out where speech is called for and act where action is called for.

If Christians are to be effective in the face of the fierce world as they face the difficulties, they have to be united together in a united action (Saayman 1991:20). Like the people who built the tower of Babel, we are to be of one mind as we unite in purpose and in action. We are to agree on what has to be done, especially on the role that we are supposed to play. We should know exactly what we want as Christians, for unless we do we are aiming at nothing, which we are likely to hit. As long as the situation stares us right in the face like this, we can have no doubt in our minds as to what ought to be done. Costas (1991:12), points out:

we ought to defend the rights of the poor to enjoy the basic amenities of life by championing more communal structures of social organisation, such as an economy that offers genuine possibilities of socialised production and consumption, and a political structure that allows greater participation and guarantees personal rights and public safety.

We ought to be constantly on the look out for opportunities to do good, for as Paul says in Galatians 6:10, we should do good to everyone. Christian mission therefore means an awakened spirit, moving among the poor and the oppressed in the form of a servant, expressing the love of Christ in the form of solidarity with them (Saayman 1991:4). If we continue to call ourselves Christians and claim to be a part of the mission of God, there is no way we can play a passive role in the issue of land redistribution in Zimbabwe.

To protect the rights of the family to its entitlement, the Israelite ancestors set up boundary stones to mark borders of the property. God pronounced that anyone who removed the boundary stones would be cursed (Deut. 27:17; Proverbs. 22:28). The church needs to put in place some boundary stones to make sure that land is not taken away from people who deserve it. In the case of boundary stones that have been

removed, the Church needs to replace them and make sure that they are not removed again. We are to be the voice to the voiceless.

6.6 Land as an issue in and for mission

The Church should realise that God takes mission seriously and when we look at a holistic approach to ministry, we look at such deeds of good will. While it is true that what we see in mission is the Church at work, mission is not primarily an activity of the Church, but an attribute of God (Bosch 1991:390). If we claim to be children of God, we must believe His heart's concerns and take them seriously as He would have us do. According to Bosch, the church is called to minister to human need in whatever circumstances and forms it appears, and to insist that all be done with justice. In its social witness the Church must be cognisant of all attitudes, forces, policies and laws, which affect the life of a people (in Saayman 1991:75). If we pay attention to all aspects of people's lives, we can win them into the kingdom, for they might not care how much we know about their unsaved condition until they know how much we care about their condition. There should be realisation that the whole gospel must witness to all realms of life-physical, social, economic, and spiritual (Bevans and Scherer 1994:127). There has been a focus on the spiritual for a long time, yet there needs to be a realisation of the link between the spiritual and each of the other realms. What we are faced with here is all the four included in the situation of the land distribution in Zimbabwe.

We, who would also give witness to the King, who manifested his kingship by taking the towel and basin to wash the feet of his disciples, give evidence of that self-surrendering love whenever the cross is the inspiring centre of our lifestyle and a servant solidarity with the poor is shown (WCC1980:35). I do not see any one of the tasks that we need to perform being worse than that of washing the disciples' feet, especially the task of restoring Justice to the land issue in Zimbabwe. It is difficult, yes but it is nothing compared to what Jesus had to do for the sake of love -even his death. The Church, as a Sacrament of Salvation, holds that the religious community should open itself to the world and actively collaborate with the state as it plays its role in uplifting the members of society (Andelson & Dawsey 1992:28). Yes, this is true, if the state is uplifting the

members of society. If not, then perhaps the state needs help to realise that. The WCC (1980:46-47) has this to say about the Church. She is not a privileged class, but a brotherhood of servants, "eager to serve all in need." The missionary's style of life is ever to be modelled in the pattern of that of the Master even as we heed the call to let this mind be also in us, which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5).

An application of this is seen in the translation model which attempts to translate the message of the Bible to a given culture, as it is understood from the culture of its carrier. One of the characteristics of this model is that it does not recognise the revelation of God in the new culture, hence is unable to relate to the new situation (Bakare 1993:77). If we are not careful, the same could happen in Zimbabwe where we are supposed to take into consideration the context of the people even those who are without land. The Zimbabwean Church should not make the mistake that was made by the early missionaries when they came to Zimbabwe. Most of them did not see the need for de-hellenization of Western Christianity let alone a de-europeanization of it in Africa (Bakare 1993:77). The local culture and its religious, socio-economic experiences were considered obsolete. The application of this model barely touched the kernel. There was an inability to create a more fundamental encounter between Christianity and the local culture.

On the other hand, there is adaptation model which permits and promotes partnership with its host culture (Bakare 1993:77). The model is one of planting the seed of faith and allowing it to interact with the native soil, leading to a new flowering of Christianity, faithful both to the local culture and to the apostolic faith. The context of the church in Zimbabwe, or anywhere else, is the people and their daily needs. Constructing a local theology is not possible if the Bible is read out of context. The teaching of the Bible cannot be explicated without consideration of the context in which it is meant to communicate the message of salvation. To do otherwise is to make it irrelevant.

The renewed call for a personal and communal lifestyle appropriate to that specific part of the churches' mission is to overcome limits, to break walls and boundaries, to go out

to the "periphery" and live with people there, which is more than to declare oneself in solidarity with them (WCC 1980:xiv). I do not see any other way through which we can reach people apart from going where they are. I have realised that when mission is done any other way other than going to the people it is not as effective. I have seen missionaries who came to Zimbabwe and settled in towns, cities and mission stations. Those did not achieve as much as did the ones who stayed with the people or at least close to them. The interesting part with our situation here is that the majority of people especially in the rural areas are the people who are hardest hit by the injustices that accompany land distribution. The message must be articulated and communicated in the context of the culture of people, their whole way of thinking, believing and acting (WCC1980:15). This will be possible when one is within the people feeling with them. Any message that is preached in Zimbabwe which does not address the problems, including the land issue, might be in danger of being out of context, hence ineffective.

Many churches have, through the simple fact of their existence, carried the testimony to God's kingdom (WCC1980:14). True as it may be that it works and has been proven to work, but mere existence will not help as much as existence at the right place. It is the Trinitarian understanding of mission, which enables us to explore fully the meaning of the kingly rule of God and his justice (WCC1980:15). The knowledge of a just God will compel us to do what is just and this includes, for the Zimbabwean people, seeking justice for the thousands who are oppressed. "It is you alone who can ultimately finish the work: the work that under God convinces your own people must be your word; and the life which will win them for Christ must be the life of holiness and moral power, as set forth by you who are men of their race" (WCC1980:16). Good News to the poor is an announcement, a proclamation in the presence of God's victory through Jesus and through human agents over all forms of oppression (WCC1980:19). The idea is not that the Good News is entirely what is stated, but realisation should exist where acknowledgement is there of the need for both the physical and spiritual approach to mission. Witnessing to the kingdom means enabling people in each particular situation to see the nature of God truly reflected in the mirror of their own culture, their own institutions and their own conflicts.

There is an argument that if land is indeed a prism through which biblical faith can be understood, not only will specific texts take different nuances and tones, but we shall find that the Bible in its entirety is about another agenda which calls into question our conventional presuppositions and our settled conclusions (Brueggemann 1977:184). The Bible is not at all silent about land and neither should Christians be. People might not care how much God loves them until it is demonstrated through the land issue that God cares. The essential restlessness of our world is the voice of the dispossessed demanding a share of land. And the restlessness is a precise echo of the biblical voice of the poor. We cannot afford to ignore such a deafeningly loud voice of the poor and landless who need to be reached with the gospel in and through its context.

6.7 Some recommendations for reflection on the land issue dimension in mission

As we look at the biblical connection of the land issue, we need to consider the implications of our actions in relation to the issue and mission. There are several issues that need to be addressed in the area of mission as it concerns the land issue. A few questions will need to be addressed.

- What is it that the church needs to do in the prevailing land issue in Zimbabwe? How should the church behave towards redressing the situation and assisting in the effects of the situation? The church needs to look at the issue closely especially realising that the people who are most affected by the imbalances are the poor who comprise a big percentage of our membership. There is need for reflection on the land issue through the Bible.
- How do we avoid taking sides in the struggle between the rich and poor? This is a relevant question as we look at the fact that believers are made up of both rich and poor and it might be easier for the rich brother to associate with those of his class and the

same to apply to the poor. This proved to be a big temptation even as did Peter in association with the Jews (Gal. 2:12-13)³

- What is it that the Church in other places and specifically in Zimbabwe has done in addressing the land issue from as far back as the early 1800s? The Church has not done much and there are lots of opportunities for the church to share the light in the context of the land issue.
- What are some of the mistakes that the Church has made either to contribute to the problem or in attempting to redress the situation? For some, the biggest temptation has been to think that the government or non-governmental organisations has the sole responsibility of redressing the issue.
- What response is called for, by individuals and by communities? How should the response be designed in order to be most effective not only in the short term but also in the long term? The answers to the questions should lead us to a theology of the community, a theology which is, "rooted in real life and lead to concrete action" (Karecki 1999:20). One of the roles that we can play is that of helping those who have land to see the other side of life where there are people without land. This should result in a situation where the landless will be invited to share in the land.

There is need for realisation that the land issue is an issue in and for mission and the church in the 21st century is faced with the task of addressing the issue. There are no 8th century prophets to speak out and to act about the land. It is up to the church to look on as some people suffer without land and from effects of land distribution or to stand and defend the rights of the oppressed. It is the duty of the church to promote justice where it may not be promoted and to show love where it is needed among those who find themselves victims of landlessness. There is need for the church to deal with the land

³ For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. (GAL 2:12-13)

issue at whatever level and in a way that is best according to the particular context of each individual Christian.

The citizens of the kingdom of God are to be freed from selfishness, ultra-nationalism, and personal ambitions (WCC1980:47). Since then in accordance with their personal projects and their economic and political interest, men have fabricated a God of their size, according to their image and likeness; a mutilated God, deaf and dumb, a dehumanised Jesus, a guardian of security, personal salvation and private property. This does not leave out those who are not a part of the kingdom of God. In talking about the land issue in Zimbabwe, we cannot leave out any party and succeed. Everyone has to be involved if we are to achieve favourable results, and thus the mission of the church will be accomplished and peace will prevail. For the sake of the powerless and the voiceless, the people of Zimbabwe are to strive to make right what has been wrong for over a hundred years. Land has to be distributed equitably.

While there are some people who have taken either extremes⁴ in the land issue, both extremes will not help anyone in the situation that we are in. It will not help us to point fingers, for we all have contributed to the state of affairs in one way or another, either by our silence or through careless talk. Land should be given to those who need it, and those who have more than enough should be prepared to part with some of it. Realisation that the land is an issue in and for mission should in turn help us to utilise it as we promote a contextual missiology.

⁴ One extreme says do anything, even to kill for land and the other says let life take its course. There is no need to worry about getting land to those who do not have it.

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