

THEOLOGY AND THE LAND QUESTION

By the Rt. Rev. Siqgibo Dwane

A re-appraisal of the task and scope of theology

My initial response to the invitation to write this paper was one of hesitation, because I felt ill equipped to venture into such unfamiliar territory. Did theology have anything worthwhile to say about the many complex issues which arise in the land debate? What material is available to stimulate one's thinking in the right direction? These are some of the questions which came to mind, and to which there were no readily available answers. I believe that this is indicative of a certain mindset within our own discipline, which is Systemic Theology, and in the Christian community at large, which perceives dogma as the domain to which the discipline should confine itself. Like other disciplines, theology has diversified and become highly specialised. This has brought about some gains as well as losses. On the positive side there is the harvest reaped both from the clarity with which questions can be put when the field of enquiry is narrower and less diffuse, as well as from the thoroughness with which they can be investigated. On the negative side there is the real danger of the exercise becoming more cerebral and remote. Theology tends to be either an academic exercise, or a discipline which is pre-occupied with the purely ecclesial matters. In either case, very little attention is given to those matters which are outside its own circle, but which exercise the minds and the consciences of the faithful in no small measure.

Perhaps what lies behind this apparent unwillingness to engage theology in the wider concerns of society, is the dichotomy between the church and the world, which clearly cuts across the doctrine of creation and providence. It would appear that the Old Testament world did not have this problem, because the world was seen in its totality as God's own property. The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it (Ps 24.1). This does not mean that the Old Testament turns a blind eye to the mixture of good and evil in the world. But what it does mean is that overall, God's will cannot be frustrated, because he is sovereign. He commands and it happens. His will accomplishes his purpose.

It is when we turn to the New Testament that we encounter a veneer of ambivalence towards the world. On the one hand the world is the stage on which God reveals his love for it through his incarnate Son. On the other hand, the evil One is the ruler of this world, but who has no authority over Christ. So, just as Christ came from above, the faithful, who are his own, are not of this even though they are in it. Now this presents no difficulties as long as 'this world' is understood to convey the same idea which the Pauline usage of the word "flesh" carries. But the boundary between the theological and the common understanding of 'this world' is easy to cross, especially in the environment in which Christianity came into being. For to the early Christians, the world represented Jewish and Gentile antagonism which compelled them to operate surreptitiously. Here we see the context giving rise to a way of regarding the world which is not hospitable to the biblical notions of creation and incarnation, and which, consequently, has had serious repercussions for the church and for theology. It is therefore imperative to raise the question whether this embrace of dualism is appropriate in the modern world, and especially in our own African context, in which life is all of a piece.

Theology in our inherited Western tradition tends to be a discipline of the cloister, which reflects in content and method, firstly the atmosphere of college or university precincts, and secondly the church's pre-occupation with those issues which affect the ordering of its own life. The outcome in either case, is the further estrangement of the discipline from the concerns and questions of the faithful, whose witness to the wider community is impoverished by lack of proper direction. To say all this is not to denigrate, as some charismatics do, the use of intellectual gifts in theology. Theology has been, and will continue to be enriched by its academic component, as much as academic theologians have always been and will always be nourished, sustained, and brought to a deeper faith in God by their participation in the common and ongoing life of prayer and worship. The point at issue here is that theology itself is impoverished by its isolation from the main stream of community life. Perhaps this point is well illustrated by the phenomenon of newly ordained clergy trying to find their feet, in an environment which challenges them with questions which leave them bewildered and perplexed, because they lack the resources to handle them creatively. No one would want to deny that theology as a response to revelation, has, as its primary focus, God's economy. There has to be a constant dialogue with the tradition. But while it is important for theology to re-enforce itself in this way, it is equally important for it to explore, not simply new ways of expressing the old, but also new avenues of encounter with the needs of human society, along which the Good News can reach and penetrate deeper into society. Theology should facilitate the advancement of the Kerygma. Its failure lies not in the fact that it is anchored in the past, but in that it is hobbled by the past, and rarely ventures into new areas on the socio-economic and political front, where it can make a significant contribution to many a human endeavour.

It is Paul Tillich who says that theology is an answering discourse which attempts to answer real questions which are raised by the human situation with the message of revelation (1). Here I believe lies the clue to the kind of approach that is necessary for theology to cope more adequately with new challenges posed by the contemporary South African situation. The putting asunder, of what God in Christ has joined together, must be called in question. Theology has to be unashamedly contextual in order to remain truly incarnational and authentically biblical. As one of the delicate central issues in the South African debate, the land question, in so far as it deeply affects people's lives must surely have something to do with God. It is as such, that it is as much the concern of theology as it is of politics, economics, ecology, and sociology.

The point of entry into this debate is, perhaps, the doctrine of creation. God did not have to create this or any other world. He is sufficient in himself, and is not complemented or enriched by any part of his creation. But in total sovereign freedom, and in the abundance of his love, he chose to create first, and then to enter into communion with his own creatures. In Jesus Christ, He takes his work of creation a step further, with the purpose of uniting all things to himself. It is with these two pillars of the faith in mind - the origin and the goal of creation - that theology can make its contribution worthwhile.

The South African Context.

The early part of our history.

It is not so long ago when the only available material on South African history was that found in history text books which began the story with the arrival of Jan Van Riebeck in 1652. But modern research, assisted by recent archaeological findings, has put paid to the myth that South Africa was uninhabited, prior to white settlement. The real picture which has now emerged is that, centuries before even the Portuguese began to venture into these parts, the indigenous people were already established in the coastal areas of the Cape Province and Natal, and spread out into the interior, as far as the Northern Transvaal, spilling into our neighbouring countries of Namibia and Botswana.

It would appear, that the very first group of inhabitants were the San (Bushmen)(2). For very many centuries these Stone Age people moved around undisturbed, maintaining their simple life style as game hunters. But their peaceful life was to be later disturbed by the 'pastoral revolution' about 2000 years ago.

What happened then was that the Khoikhoi, in what is now Botswana, acquired sheep from Sudanic people from the North and cattle from the Bantu speaking people from the East. Consequently, the process of migration began as the former Khoikhoi hunters migrated South, in search of grazing land for their livestock. Oral tradition has it, that at the confluence of the Orange and the Vaal rivers, the Khoikhoi followed the example of Abraham and Lot, and split into three groups. One group remained behind, another went in a westerly direction towards Namaqualand, eventually crossing into Namibia, and the third ventured Southwards towards the Cape Peninsula (3). It was the latter group which was to come into contact with the San, and bring new dynamics to their old way of life. When the Khoikhoi and the San met, there arose a conflict over land and its resources. The San were hunters, while the Khoikhoi were shepherds, and the land was therefore important to both. As the Khoikhoi were better organized militarily, the San were eventually subjugated; some of them retreated to the mountains and desert areas, while others were assimilated into the dominant group as servants, shepherds, warriors, and marriage spouses. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Khoikhoi had emerged as the dominant group in the Cape Peninsula(4).

The period between 250 and 1100A.D. is known as South Africa's Iron Age: During this period, Bantu speaking people arrived with iron manufacturing skills and introduced this industry as a new feature of the South African way of life. From the very early days of the Iron Age intermarriage took place between the Khoisan and the Bantu people. The economy of this period was geared towards food production, and the rearing of cattle, sheep and goats. Pottery deposits of the early Iron Age have been found in the Transvaal, Natal, and the Eastern Cape, and their dating goes back to the fifth, sixth and eighth centuries(5). There is also evidence of the mining industry at various sites in the Transvaal, such as, Phalaborwa and Soutpansberg (6).

The Colonial era.

In the early period of our history, the impression gained is that, the various groups, on the whole, kept relationships with each other reasonably cordial. There was of course competition for land, which often led to friction, and which sometimes burst into small scale wars. But these skirmishes were very minor compared to the ferocious campaigns which the white man launched against the indigenous population. using their superior weapons first and then their unjust laws later. White people tore apart the old bond between land and its people.

The scramble for land began in earnest when the Dutch East India company, in its endeavour to make the Cape settlement viable, took the decision to release some of its officers, so as to cut down on salaries. these 'free burghers' as they became known, were, so to speak, let loose on the black population, because, without capital to establish themselves, and to pay for the required labour on farms, they resorted to rough tactics as means of survival. And as they moved further into the interior, Cape Town's restraining influence diminished, and correspondingly the level of violence and outrage increased. They were always ready to increase their herds and their lands at the expense of the indigenous people(7).

With the arrival of the French Huguenots in 1688, the situation went from bad to worse. Expansion proceeded at a rapid pace, as the colonists murdered and looted to make ends meet, and to open up the interior. An example of this kind of behaviour is an incident which took place in 1705, the account of which is as follows:

A certain Johannes Starrenberg, Landdrost of Stellenbosch, undertook a journey towards Saldanha, in the hope of finding oxen from the Khoikhoi to barter for the company. But there were very few oxen there because, a 'freeman general called Dronke Gerrit, had come to their kraal a few years previously, accompanied by others, and without any parley fixed on it from all sides, chased out the Hottentots, set fire to their huts and took away all their cattle without their knowing for what reason since they had never harmed any of the Dutch...(8). For many colonists this was a way of life, the consequence of which is that by 1740, the only Khoikhoi left in the Western Cape had been reduced to poverty and servitude(9). This sporadic seizure of land was legalized in 1672 and 1717, when some 400 farms were granted in freehold(10).

What happened to the Khoisan in the Western Cape was only a warming up session for the conflict in the Eastern Cape frontier between the combined British forces and Boer trekkers on the one hand, and the Xhosa on the other. Up until the late 17th century, the Eastern Cape was the meeting ground between the Khoisan and the Nguni people. The Khoisan were nomadic, while the Nguni were more of a settled agricultural society, growing crops and producing iron goods. Contact between the two groups was on the whole friendly and of mutual benefit. Sometimes it resulted in intermarriage, but of more permanent value is the gift of Khoisan clicks to the Xhosa language. When the trekboers arrived, they settled in quietly amongst the Xhosas and began trade in iron, copper and trinkets in exchange for cattle and ivory. Trouble seems to have begun in 1788, when the Cape governor Von Plettenberg drew some Gwali chiefs into an agreement, which required that the Xhosa should observe the upper Fish and Bushman's

rivers as the Colony's boundary. This in itself was a controversial arrangement, because the Gwali chiefs as chiefs of Junior rank in the Xhosa hierarchy, could not enter into such an agreement on behalf of all the Xhosa people. Then to exasperate an already delicate situation, in 1780, Von Plettenberg changed the agreement unilaterally, and declared the Fish river in its entire length as the official boundary. In other words, the territory between the Fish and the Bushman's rivers was thereby annexed at the stroke of a pen. By this time, there were 5 Xhosa chiefdoms living West of the Fish river, in the area between Peddie and Alexandria, claiming ownership of the land as far as the Sundays river, some 30 kilometers away from Port Elizabeth. That same year the commandant of the Eastern Cape by the name of Andriaan van Jaarsveld, received instructions from Cape Town to remove the 5 chiefdoms forcibly. At first he tried to persuade them to move, but when they were adamant, he assembled a kommando, which attacked and killed an unrecorded number of people and looted thousands of their cattle. This was the beginning of enforced removals in this country, and the consequent annexation of land by the government for white settlement(11). When the British entered the scene in 1795, they carried forward the policy of military intervention on the side of the Boers against Xhosa people.

In 1812, in what became the second war of dispossession, Lieutenant Colonel Graham launched a vicious attack on Chiefs Chungwa and Ndlambe, for which he was rewarded with the proclamation of Grahamstown, in respect of his service whose outcome was that 'the kaffir hordes have been driven from the valuable district (12)'

The settlement of the 1820 British immigrants in this area coupled with the population growth, to which large Dutch families and the early age at which their marriages were contracted contributed in no small measure, was to make the Eastern frontier over-populated, and prepare the way for the Great Trek. The great trek itself led to the carnage of 1838, at what sadly but appropriately came to be known as the blood river. With this achievement, the colonists annexed the Southern part of Natal as the Republic of Natal. The story continues but cannot be narrated in its entirety here, partly because the rest is well known, and partly because the point of this account is to put this debate on land in its context, and remind us that ours is a past, with an ancestry which is red tooth and claw.

Military conquest over, the stage was set for the programme of legislation which would carry forward the campaign for land. This began in 1894 in the Cape parliament. In that year, Cecil John Rhodes piloted the Glen Grey Act, whose chief motive was 'to force more kaffirs into the wage labour market by first limiting their access to land, and then by imposing 10 shilling labour tax on all those who could not prove they had been in some wage employment for at least three months in a year(13)'

This bill was passed at a time when the government itself acknowledged that "the native district of Peddie surpasses the European district of Albany in its productive powers" and that Witenberg reserve raised so much wheat, maize and millet that it 'served as the granary of both Northern Districts and the Free State too(14)". It came at a time when African peasants in Peddie, Bedford, Stutterheim, Queenstown and Alice districts were excelling as wool farmers(15).

The crown of this legislation on land came in 1913 and 1936 when what was implicit in Cecil John Rhodes' Glen Grey Act was made explicit. Prime land and the bulk of South African territory was now the preserve of the white minority. The 1913 land Act restricted the acquisition of land by white and black people to certain designated areas, and thus territorial segregation became law. In terms of this act, 67.3 percent of the total population was restricted to 7.5 percent of the land. The Hertzog Bills of 1936 increased the percentage to 13. The group Areas Act passed under the present regime, extended the principle of territorial segregation to coloureds and Indians, thus preparing the way for the homeland system, which made the enforced removal of people from their land a matter of routine.

It is to the many and complex questions raised in this context that a theological input is required. And this is a formidable and daunting task because of the size of the problem, and the unfortunate past which has created it. Two opposite tendencies should be avoided here. The one is movement towards fixed positions on either side of the question, which is bound to make the discussion acrimonious and fruitless. The kind of history we have had is divisive, and could make it a temptation for many an unwary person to regard the adopting of hardened attitudes as natural. The other inclination is to bend over backwards, and give up principle for the sake of accommodating the other side. This too has to be avoided because truth has to be faced. There can be no solution to any of the problems without grasping the nettle of equitable land distribution. Land will not be readily given up by those who regard themselves as the rightful owners. But when the country is poised as it is for new and radical changes, it may be that this is the opportune moment for this debate. It is possible that the atmosphere of greater openness to the future has created conditions conducive to realize about the requirements of the just society South Africa is seeking to become.

The context has revealed the underlying causes of our present predicament. We need to direct some attention to the issues which characterize the present, and which must be faced honestly and squarely. Perhaps the most obvious one is **homelessness**. As people has emerged to build shacks on what open spaces are available on the remainder of the 13 percent of land occupied by black people, one has become aware that the problem has been hidden away from public attention by the fact that these families, have been squatting on other people's premises, often in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. Their present position has not altered the conditions, but it has at least given them a place of their own for which no rent is due to the landlord. The second thing that comes to mind is the economic result of **landlessness**. This is a long story, but briefly we can note that John Rhodes set in motion the process of making land less and less accessible to black people, so as to force them into the labour market. And so little by little the male population drifted towards the urban areas in the hope of finding something to keep the home fires burning. But as the economy has slumped, so the numbers of those entering the labour market have increased, resulting in the loss of jobs for some, or their unavailability for others. Over the years, the problem has increased to an alarming proportion, creating such poverty and hardship. Related to this, is the phenomenon of **under utilized land** in the rural areas. In the fifties, the government introduced the programme of culling livestock, so that the land available to black people could cope with the

demands made on it. This has impoverished black peasants as it has deprived them of their wealth. The result is, that whereas in those years rural communities were a flurry of activity in spring and at harvest time, there is very little agriculture today in those same areas, because people no longer have the means of production.

It may be that for a fast growing population, food production is going to be a key to the problem of unemployed and destitute people. The next area concerns **ecology**. It is hardly surprising that there is so much soil erosion in the countryside, considering the overcrowding that there is. There can be no solution to this problem unless more land is made available to rural communities, with incentives to encourage them to seek a better life elsewhere. A policy on land which does not address the need for the preservation of the environment, is not a responsible one. Land destruction and pollution show lack of proper stewardship. Then finally there is the **psychological aspect** which has to do with white people's fears and anxieties. These will require much patience, and scores of goodwill and understanding. It is on account of all these features of the contemporary scene, that both the historical and theological perspectives are crucial to this debate. We need to be reminded of the route by which we have arrived where we are. Moreover, we have to find the right values with which to lay the foundation for a new society. It is to this more than any other aspect of this debate that theology can make a modest but important contribution, and this takes us to the next subject.

The earth is the Lord's

The logic of the biblical narrative might not appeal to those with a philosophical bent of mind because, in it, God is not the conclusion, but the opening word of introduction or greeting. God reveals himself as Person who draws human beings to a personal relationship with himself. And it is out of this personal encounter with him that human understanding of him grows. From knowledge of God in his ontological being, and in the economy of revelation, light radiates to the world, and opens up its mystery. The 'First Cause' himself imparts knowledge about secondary causes, and about the purpose of all being. What this means is that, in the logic of the bible, salvation history is prior to and gives rise to the doctrine of creation. It was the Exodus as we all know which widened Israel's horizons, and opened her eyes to the majesty of God in creation. It may be that there is an important lesson in this for South Africa. Like the Hebrews, this land is experiencing something of God's over and goodness as he opens up a new era of deliverance from bondage, and promise of a new South Africa. What we have hoped and prayed for, for many years is now at our doorstep. Perhaps we should regard the new constitution that is being prepared, not simply as the basis for new laws, but as a covenant, which binds all in this land to God's Justice, and to the pursuit of common goals. What is this Justice, and what are the common goals? The answer to this is to be found in that nature of God's being whose knowledge he imparts to his creation, as the clue to the purpose of creation.

In Genesis 1 and 2 P and J refer to the Spirit of God as the life giving principle in creation. This says two things:- the first is that God who is the source of life has given his own vitality to his creatures. The second is that, as his own life is one in communion of the Persons of the Trinity, so his human creatures have real and

meaningful life in so far as they participate in the common welfare of human beings which draws them to the foundation and goal of their life. Built into creation therefore is the principle of mutuality, interdependence and hunger for truth and ultimate realisation of the joy of friendship. In this tendency towards relationships with one another, human beings reflect something of the social life of the Trinity and of God's outgoing love to creation. the mandate to be fruitful, to fill the earth and subdue it is given to both men and women in communion. There can be no more eloquent expression of the principle of equality between the sexes and of their mutual interdependence than is given in Genesis 1.26-28, and 2.18-24 Human beings therefore, have as their special calling, this great privilege to represent what God is within himself, as well as what he does in the economy of creation and redemption. They do so with the help of his Spirit. Here I believe is grist for the mill, something we can get our teeth into, and digest as we participate in this debate. For the question of land and resources is ultimately a question of who we are, and what the real point of human life is. These are not theoretical but practical questions which require incarnate expression in the life of the community

The starting point is the belief that as Sovereign creator and Lord of the universe, God owns the whole earth and all that is in it. (Psalm 24.1, 33.6-8). It is in this connection that the Leviticus Code concerned with the Sabbatical and the Jubilee year should be considered. There are at least 4 things which emerge, and through which the fundamental truth that land and people belong to God, filters through. The first is, that the land itself deserves to be given a rest. It has to lie fallow for the whole of the sabbatical year. (Lev. 25.5). Both Hosea 10.12 and Jeremiah 4.3 use the imagery of fallowing, thus indicating that this is an ancient custom. Norman Snaith draws attention to Lev 26.35 which suggests that the custom was not observed in pre-exilic times. He argues, that because of the problem of food shortage which a universal observance of this custom would create, perhaps the Seventh year was observed for each particular plot, at its seventh year. However, in post-exilic times, Josephus refers to the custom and its observance of both Jews and Samaritans (16). (See also 1 Mac. 6.49, 53). The second thing which emerges is concern for the poor. (Exod.23.11). In the Sabbatical year as at harvest time, the needs of the poor and of strangers should not be lost sight of (Lev.23.22, Ruth). Thirdly, in respect of the Jubilee there is the idea of restoring land to its original owners. And fourthly there is the principle of abolishing debt and of setting Israelites free from slavery. Roland De Vaux argues that whereas the idea of redemption of property by the next of kin in order to keep it within the family/clan is an old and established custom whose parallel is the levirate, the law of Jubilee is perhaps Utopian (17). M. Barrows concurs by saying that perhaps, this is a law which was never put into application(18). Be that as it may, the point still stands, that law as the expression of God's Justice, comes down firmly on the side of the poor, and the defenseless (See the holiness code in Lev. 19.9-10). Land belongs to God, and religious law limits the rights of human occupants. It may not be sold in perpetuity, and the prosperous are not allowed to go on 'adding house to house', and 'joining field to field' at the expense of less fortunate members of society (Isaiah 5.8). Even kings are not allowed to confiscate land from their subjects (1Kings 21).

For the sake of the Kingdom

Whereas the Old Testament has much to say about land in particular and material possessions in general, in the New Testament one finds a different atmosphere, in that, material prosperity is no longer necessarily a sign of God's favour. In fact Jesus sets little store by wealth and material possessions. For the kingdom promises more lasting treasures which neither thief can steal, nor moth destroy. Invitation to the kingdom is a call to a life of simplicity and dependence upon God. The kingdom requires a disposition of child-like trust in God, who feeds the raven, and clothes the lily with glory which surpasses even that of Solomon. To inculcate these new values in the minds of his disciples, Jesus sends them on a mission with the command to carry no bread, no pack, and no money in their belts (Mark 6.7-9). On the question of land, the New Testament says very little, but it has much to say about the proper use of material possessions, and the need to care for the poor. In Luke 16, the story of Lazarus and the rich man is told against the rich who show no concern for the poor. This story illustrates the teaching of the sermon on the mount that blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Another rich man who is seeking eternal life, Jesus calls first to give up his possessions for the sake of the poor, and then to come and follow him (Mark 10.21). He turns away sorrowful to his great possessions which cannot give him the Joy he is seeking. This incident provides the occasion for Jesus to declare that possession of wealth makes entry into the kingdom will nigh impossible. The imagery of the camel and the eye of a needle illustrates the vastness of the chasm which separates the wealthy from God. By contrast, the poor widow who offers her last coin to God, is commended for her sacrificial giving (Mark 12.42-44).

There seems to be two attitudes to wealth in the gospels related to the manner of its use. On the one hand there is the attitude of the selfish rich man who regards the acquisition of wealth as a means of self indulgence. "Saul, you have ample goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink and be merry". This type of person is not rich towards God (Luke 12.19). The other kind is illustrated by Zachaeus who is wealthy, but is loving and compassionate. 'Half of my goods I give to the poor', he says. About him Jesus says 'Today salvation has come to this house' (Luke 19.1-10). Perhaps the conclusion we are meant to draw from this is that wealth in itself is neutral, and that it is those who cling to it, and use it selfishly, who stand condemned. For the kingdom of God calls people to a life of sharing themselves and what they have with one another in God.

The practice of the common life.

In the Acts of the Apostles and in the epistles, we find the early church attempting to put into practice the values of the kingdom. The chief motif which runs through all these writings, is the one of loving concern for other people. Sometimes this is expressed in the care which is shown for their material needs as for instance in Paul's collection for the Saints in Jerusalem, or in Hebrews' exhortation to 'let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality...' (Hebrews 13.1) or indeed in the corporate life led by the apostolic community in Jerusalem (Acts 2.44-5, 4.32-37). At other times this same concern is found in the pastoral care exercised by leaders, as they gently direct the faithful towards the truth and the mystery of Christ. In this regard, the Epistle of James must be given credit, for the way in which it insists that faith and works are inseparable. But we must

return briefly to the early chapters of Acts, in order to appreciate the power which gave impetus to these new initiatives

It is interesting to note that at the end of the Fourth Gospel, Easter and Pentecost are intertwined, thus reminding us of the creation story. For in Genesis 1 and 2 we saw that the Spirit of God who nestles over formless matter, is the same breath who gives rise to new forms of life, and turns life-less dust into a living human person. In John 20, the risen Christ imparts his Spirit to his disciples, thus kindling in them new life, his own risen life. Central to the promise of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel, is the idea that 'he will take what is mine and declare it to you' (John 16:14). In the power of the Spirit, the disciples are to become the embodiment of his witness to Christ. And so in Acts, Pentecost is the moment of the transfiguration and empowerment of the disciples. Through this new community, Christ continues his incarnate life and work begun in his earthly ministry. In Acts 2:42f, and 4:32f we see the followers of him who though rich, yet for our sake became poor, choose his own life of poverty and simplicity. We see in them the beginnings of the religious life, one heart and one soul in the common life. What they therefore proclaim is not a doctrine of Christ, but the living Lord whose letter of commendation they are, written not with ink, but with Spirit of God. And here I believe lies the crux of the matter. As a result of our faith in God, the society we are should undergo a transformation, a restructuring which reflects our common goals as a nation. And Christians should more readily understand that sacrifices have to be made, in order that there may be a more equitable distribution of land resources. Land owning Christians by which I mean government, corporations, churches, as well as farmers, have a special responsibility to demonstrate the values of the kingdom in this situation, so that consensus can be achieved before new land legislation comes into effect.

Conclusion

And here finally we come to the conclusion of this discussion. Earlier on we saw that white settlers acquired land by fair means or foul, and that the result is that the black population has become impoverished, with many people who are homeless. We also noted that it is important for the historical background to the present to be acknowledged, and not swept under the carpet. The more just society we seek to establish has to have truth as its firm foundation. The truth is, that grave injustice has been done to black people, and for that there should be repentance, demonstrated by a willingness on the part of the present land owners to make restitution. Zacchaeus tells the Lord that he restored fourfold of what he defrauded. We might say that he built the principle of affirmative action into restitution, whilst it is impossible to put the clock back, it is nonetheless imperative that the wounds of the past are not left to fester, but are given proper treatment and a chance to heal. There are a few lessons from the Old Testament which might be of help.

The most important one is the fundamental assertion that land belongs to God, and that human beings are stewards of God's creation. Stewardship of land carries with it a responsibility to God for the manner in which it is used. Here we may recall, that the sabbatical idea concerns two very important principles which are - that land should not be overused, and that provision for the poor is a condition for entitlement to land use. Land policy must incorporate measures to protect the environment. It should also take into account the needs of the poorer section of the community. This may call for a periodical evaluation of the way in

which land has been used, and measures to assist the disadvantaged to acquire, develop, and make land profitable. This would be following the Zachaeus principle that what has been unjustly taken away should be restored fourfold. Restitution should be accompanied by affirmative action. The Old Testament prohibits the practice of selling land in perpetuity because all land belongs to God. What this says in our situation is that, unless people exercise proper stewardship, perhaps they should not retain ownership of land.

Land exerts, through the force of gravity, a downward pull on all human beings. We all need land to build homes, or do farming or invest money in it. Scramble for land is therefore unavoidable, and human nature being what it is, the selfish element of wanting to add field to field, will always be a feature of land acquisition. It is important to remember that we are called to the kingdom to learn to share, so that all may have the benefit of God's bounty, and begin this way to appropriate the riches of heaven.

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