

THE GRABBING OF NABOTH'S VINEYARD: THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE 1958 LAND POLICY IN BOTSWANA AND ITS CHALLENGES TO THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN BOTSWANA AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Abstract

This paper examines the 1968 Land Policy of Botswana to see the implications it has on the economy of Botswana, and its challenges to the mission of the church in Botswana and Southern Africa. The basic argument of the paper is that the mission work in Southern African and Botswana had always showed great interest in acquiring land for the poor and downtrodden in Southern Africa. The paper gives a brief analysis of the historical development of the land issue in Southern Africa and the role played by missionaries in acquiring land for the poor. A critique of the land policy of Botswana is made on the theory of Naboth's vineyard which was grabbed by King Ahab. The criticism is that the land policy of Botswana has contributed and still contributes to the high rise of poverty and unemployment in Botswana and this has led to the emergence of many social problems in the country. The implications of the Land Policy of Botswana on the economic distribution policies of Botswana call for a new understanding and approach to mission and the role of the church in Botswana and Southern Africa.

Keywords: Botswana, Land policy, Naboth's vineyard

General Introduction and Objectives of this Paper

This paper discusses the land issue in Botswana. There is a problem with the land tenure system of Botswana. The land is allocated to people by Land Boards which were introduced in 1968. By so doing, several problems have arisen: The land which used to be allocated by the chief and regarded as sacred and entrusted to families who inherited it through-out generations changed; secondly, rich people could acquire more land than the poor; and thirdly, the Land Boards delay in their allocation of land, resulting in people settling illegally. There is a great struggle to acquire land in Botswana since fertile land is very scarce when compared to semi-desert land. The implications are very serious economic differences between the Batswana. The rich are getting richer whilst the poor are continuously suffering. The paper will also examine briefly, if such problems are found the South African region.

To achieve the above, this paper has used the Naboth story as the model for developing a good attitude to land and its use.

The Naboth Model

In 1993, Bakare wrote a book titled: *My Right to land in the Bible and in Zimbabwe*. In the first chapter he writes:

From time immemorial, land has played a vital role in the history of human beings. When handled with care, it 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 cites Walter Brueggeman (1977), who has argued that land is the central reality to biblical faith. The acquiring of land by the children of Israel gave them a new identity from that of wanderers. Land, in many African cultures, including that of the Batswana, belongs to God *Modimo* and it is passed from one generation to another. It is the greatest gift by God to humanity and it cannot be sold or taken away by force by anyone from its owner. It is within this context that our examination of the land policy of Botswana should be viewed.

This paper has used the Naboth vineyard model as a critique of the land tenure system in Botswana and an incitement to the church to re-examine its role in Botswana. The story of Naboth is in 1 Kings 11:1ff. He lived in the town of Jezreel, where he owned a vineyard. The vineyard was coveted by King Ahab of Israel since it adjoined his land. According to Devaux (1980), the law of Israel protected Naboth because the King could only acquire land by purchase with the agreement of the owner (Lev. 25:23, 24). Anderson (1996) states that King Ahab wanted the vineyard which adjoined his palace so that he could enjoy more room. Although the terms of King Ahab were generous, Naboth could not sell the land because it did not belong to him as a person but to the family. It was passed down from generation to generation as a sacred inheritance. By citing Yahweh as the giver of land, Naboth was revealing a unique attitude towards land in Israel. Anderson (1996:277) argues thus:

According to this view, the real owner of land is Yahweh. Fulfilling the promises made to the ancestors of Israel, Yahweh had brought the Israelites into a country where they could settle down and had given the land to various tribes and clans. They were to be stewards of Yahweh's property, administering it for the welfare of the whole community. So land-grabbing and private speculation were ruled out by the very nature of the covenant community.

King Ahab knew about this attitude to land. When Naboth refused the land, he became sullen. His wife Jezebel realized this and wanted to know why the king was unhappy. Coming from Phoenicia where commercial civilization had developed, she had different conceptions of property. The Baal religion put no limitations on the exercise of royal power. She made a plot to get Naboth and his sons killed (11 Kings 9:26), so that King Ahab could take possession of the land. Ahab could not go freely because the word of God came to Elijah the Tishbite who encountered King Ahab and accused him of violating the rule of Yahweh. The king became penitent and confessed to Yahweh for his sin. The direct confrontation between King Ahab and Prophet Elijah provides lessons on the mission of the church in as far as social justice is concerned. It is a pity that the history of the church in Southern Africa has many examples of missionaries who acquired land from Government to provide mission villages, which were controlled by the church. The missionaries did not, however, relocate such land to the dispossessed people but used it as private missionary land. In many respects, they failed to see the importance of land and allocate it to the people.

Anderson (1996:278) argues that:

The Naboth incident provides an excellent preface to the social message of the prophets of a later period. Here we see the Baal religion and the Yahweh faith in opposition, not in a dramatic contest on Carmel but in the field of social relations. The great Israelite prophets were champions of the stern ethical demands of the ancient Mosaic tradition.

Land belonged to the family and it was continuously inherited throughout the generations of that family. It was sacred and could not be sold easily.

Anderson (1996) points out the value of land by citing the American national anthem in which they praise God for the land they acquired by killing and driving out the Indians. He points out the envious position in which Israel, the Promised Land, lay which made it to experience many wars which were fought in the area for the possession of land. The Hebrews belonged to the wandering nations but needed a land where they could establish their identity though a full participation in life. It is this belief which made them to believe that Yahweh was with them in their conquests of the Canaanites and the occupation of the land. It is from this conviction that the ownership of land was an unalienable right which any man could not let go. This is the reason why Naboth appealed to the land of his ancestors with which he could not part. There are similarities in the beliefs and concepts and use of land between the Batswana and the Jewish people.

The Traditional Land Tenure of the Batswana

Schapera (1938) has shown that the traditional ownership of land was under the control of the chiefs who held the land on behalf of the people. The chief in Botswana culture was the custodian of the land and land was regarded as a sacred gift from God (*Modimo*) and every person had a right to arable land, communal grazing land and a place of residence. All these were allocated by the chief who was also the religious leader of the people and whose ancestors yielded great authority over the ancestors of the ordinary people.

The Present Land Policy of Botswana

In 1968 the Botswana independent Government changed this land policy which for many years had been supported by the Colonial Government. According to Colclough and MacCarthy (1980) in 1968 the new land policy was introduced which removed the power to allocate land from the chiefs to Land Boards which were directed by the District Councils. The chief became an ex-officio member of the Board. Let me highlight the major items of the land act of 1968. The act is entitled *Tribal Land Cap. 32:03*. The relevant parts read thus:

10. (1) All the rights and title to land in each tribal area ... shall vest in the land board set out in relation to it ... in trust for the benefit and advantage of the tribesmen of that area and for the purpose of promoting the economic and social development of all the peoples of Botswana.
- (2) Nothing in this section shall have the effect of vesting in a land board any land or right to water held by any person in his personal capacity.
13. (1) All the powers vested in a Chief under customary law in relation to land including:
 - (a) the granting of rights to use any land;
 - (b) the cancellation of the grant of any rights to use any land including a grant made prior to the coming into operation of this Act;

- (c) hearing of appeals from, confirming or setting aside any decision of any subordinate land authority;
- (d) the imposition of restrictions on the use of tribal land, shall be vested in and performed by a land board acting in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

The abovementioned items changed the social, political and religious structures of the Botswana in a very fundamental manner. Land which was hereditary could be taken away from its owners who had possessed it from generation to generation as a gift from God and the ancestors. It then became a commodity that could be controlled and commercialized by land boards composed of members through no religious consideration but through political ballot boxes which caused divisions amongst the members themselves who are trusted with the great human commodity which is land. It is for this reason that cries over corruption in the allocation of land by land boards has become one of the practices which is now damaging the once good name of Botswana as a good example of a democratic state in Africa.

The Earliest Reactions to the New Land Policy of Botswana

The first oppositions to the Bill before it became law, came from a few members in the then opposition party. Opposing the Bill, an opposition member argued:

I should put it to the Assembly that lies have been told to the people. They were shown the bright side of the Bill and I am not certain that the Chiefs who are now civil servants as in the Chieftainship Law, have been tricked somewhere and somehow after debating so ably in a responsible manner (Hansard, 1968:68).

The theme of the argument was for the government to point out as to who complained about land allocation by Chiefs which called for the type of Bill being introduced. There was no convincing answer to that question. The member went on to say that:

This long struggle of upstarts who formed a Government and are so high that they never dreamed of who can say now we are going to decide land administered by land boards. Land must have change of rule administered by Land Boards which can sue and be sued in their own name. It becomes chaos if for a crime of the Domkrag the land grabbers, the agents of Capitalism, who are themselves capitalists, if they can come down to say that we do not use this other land and therefore must be a method to have Land Boards or Junior Land Boards who in all probabilities must keep their books, they must be responsible (Hansard, 1968: 69–70).

The member went on to point out what was to be expected in the future if the Bill became law. He stated:

Now this Government of capitalists wants to create in Botswana what happened in many capitalist countries including their masters Britain where you have the landed and the landless, where you have unemployment, where you have all those problems which are inherent as a result of a Bill of this nature or a Law of this nature (Hansard, 1968:70).

In retaliation, a member of Parliament in the Government argued that: "Mr Speaker, the Bill is essentially necessary. Its purpose should clearly seem to be to accelerate the economic growth of this country" (Hansard, 1968:74). The opposition member added that the Bill would also create problems in addition to economic growth. The governing party member pointed out that the Bill would promote agricultural production to stop reliance on imported food. He argued that boys trained in agricultural production would find land to use as opposed to tribal land tenure. He argued that Chiefs were tired of distributing land

and needed Land Boards to assist them and that there was also need for an old custom to be improved. Another opposition member stated:

Mr Speaker, if this Bill is passed the land is going to become the property of rich individuals. Under the Bill, the Land board may grant any person land on such terms and conditions it may decide, which means that land is not only going to be granted to the citizens of this country, it means land is going to be granted to foreigners (Hansard, 1968:78).

The argument of the member is that the Bill does not state that land would be given to citizens only but could also be given to foreigners. The member also argued that the chiefs did not accept the Bill but were forced by government since they are now considered civil servants.

The main reason for the rejection of the Bill was that the Batswana in the different districts had to apply for land either for residential or even for ploughing purposes. Ancestral land could be given to a different clan alienating it from the family which had always owned it from generation to generation. The new law required members of a clan to apply for any of their land which had not been ploughed for more than five years. Any member of the community could apply for such land if the family that owns the land did not apply for it and obtained a certificate of ownership. In many cases applications for land, especially for residential purposes, take a very long time to be processed. The result had been that some people would settle in the land without the permission from the land boards. This has resulted in many houses being destroyed, especially in urban areas where people squat in the peripheries of the urban areas in search of rare employment.

Problems Brought by the New Land Policy to the Batswana

The policy of applying for land is completely foreign to Botswana culture and land tenure system. Ancestral land could not be sold but given freely to members of the family and no-one, except the chief, could allocate such land on behalf of the ancestors. The new land policy was followed by the Tribal Land Grazing Policy (TGLP). The grazing land policy is stated in article 17 of the Land Act of 1968. The purpose, according to Peters (1994), was to improve the lives of the Batswana by dividing land use into three categories: Commercial land, where the rich cattle farmers were given large tracts of land to develop their stock; communal, where the poor cattle owners were crowded in overgrazed lands, and the reserved land, for the future generations. Peters views the TGLP in these feelings:

Despite its now considerable wealth, Botswana, like other mineral-led economies, faces the problem of low employment potential of mining. The livelihoods of the population continue to depend on the combination of crop cultivation, animal husbandry, and wage labor. Cattle are as politically significant as they are economically and socially important to Botswana's population. Thus a policy intended to change access to grazing lands was watched very carefully by people outside and inside government and led to numerous reports in its preparation as well as a national consultation by radio with Botswana's rural populace (1994:138).

Peters goes on to look critically at Land Boards where the elites centralize the decisions about land to their own benefit as one way by which the rich became richer when the poor became poorer in a wealthy economy. The same sentiments are expressed by Gulbrandsen (1994), who has actually titled his book *Poverty in the Midst of Plenty*, that cattle ownership put pressure upon communal land. Botswana which in the 1970s was amongst the poorest 25 countries in Africa, suddenly became one of the richest. This was caused by the discovery of diamonds and the growth in the cattle population generated by foreign aid.

The situation did not, however, benefit the nation at large. Gulbrandsen writes "...the rich have become richer and the poor have remained poor" (1994:36). Looking critically at the TGLP, Gulbrandsen says:

...while thousands of smallholders are confined to deteriorating pastures and increasingly over-populated agricultural land, the small category of extremely rich cattle owners enjoy access to vast tracts of highly productive grazing land, at the same time as they often cultivate large expanses of arable land (1994:36).

This situation is common all over Botswana and has impoverished many people who have flocked to the urban areas. Making a further critique of the TGLP, Gulbrandsen says:

This policy has, I shall argue, had the opposite effect: Supporting herd growth and appropriation of the lion's share of the tribal communal land by the large herd owners, while enclosing the majority in an increasingly overstocked section of the commonage (1994:39).

According to the observation of Gulbrandsen, by 1994 5% of the population of Botswana owned more than half of the national herd. This situation is growing and through continued revisions of agricultural policies, the majority of the people in Botswana will remain without any land nor cattle. This is evidenced by the rate at which urbanization is growing. Most of the people who flock to the urban areas are those who have been deprived of land ownership and cattle farming. These people inflate the populations of Botswana's major industrial centres. The population rise is as follows (Charumbira, 1997):

	1991	1996	2001
Gaborone	133,468	174,583	224,286
Francistown	65,244	84,075	406,555
Lobatse	26,052	29,172	32,864
Selibe-Pikwe	39,772	44,581	50,312
Orapa	8,827	10,023	11,180
Jwaneng	11,188	14,212	17,787
Sowa	2,228	2,992	3,896

According to Botswana standards and considering the fact that the population of Botswana is only 1.6 million, this is a very amazing number of people moving to the towns. There are many other urban areas in Botswana, most of which were formerly villages. The 1991 definition of an urban area is a place that has a population of 5,000 people and 75% of whom are engaged in non-agricultural occupations. The increase in urban settlement has been dramatic in that by 1971, the urban population was 9.6%, by 1981 it had risen to 18.3% and by 1991 it had shot to 45.7% (*1987 Population & Housing Census Analytical Report*, April, 1987). Gaborone, which had a population of 18,000 in 1971, realized a population of 60,000 in 1981. These figures should not please people as the politicians believe in the argument that it is a sign of economic success and growth. The truth of the matter is that it is a question of poverty and dispossession of land by the elites of whom the politicians are the highest in wealth accumulation.

In many areas of Botswana, Land Boards are blamed for corruption and unfair allocation of land. The great problem is that the new land policy tends to favour the rich above the poor. The policy states that any land that is acquired should be developed in five years time, and failure to do so will lead to the land being allocated to others who are able to de-

velop. This part of the land policy has led to the rich grabbing the lands of the poor. It has also led to the rich taking advantage of the poor in cattle ownership. The over three million herd of cattle in Botswana is owned by less than 5% of the population. These are the people who also own the land because, in Botswana, land is used mainly for cattle farming purposes.

The coming of independence coincided with the sudden permission of people to live permanently on the lands (Silishena, 1980). The examples from the Kweneng District Council, which is one of the big districts of Botswana, show that the reason given for the migration to the lands is mainly to have access to cattle in order to get some milk and also to take care of the lands, to plough in good time. One other popular reason is being able to have access to firewood. The fact that people want to have access to the cattle is because the lands are also used as grazing areas in times of shortage of grass. Although many tribal and council laws may not allow cattle being kept at the lands, people argue that they keep them for ploughing purposes.

This paper wishes to emphasize the point that it is the rich who are given large tracts of land by the Land Boards on the argument that they make full use of the land. The rich have tractors for ploughing, in addition to cattle. They can plough large tracts of land and engage the landless and the non-cattle owners to look after their herds of cattle and large agricultural lands. The poor cannot claim their land rights because they fail to develop the land. In a conference held at Pitshane (*People-centred management for sustainable Land Development*, 26th–30th October, 1998), the Land Boards were looking at the morality of land allocation in Botswana. The problem was that the law forces them to take land from poor people and pass it to the rich. Most of the land that is taken away is inherited land, similar to that of Naboth. When the land is taken away, it not only creates a situation of economic poverty but also creates a very serious religious situation. The land of the ancestors is disinherited from the family line and is given to foreigners. The link between the living and the dead is shaken by this act. The poor people then roam the country, moving from one town to another, seeking employment, because the means of survival is destroyed. Bad luck befalls such people and they have no place to appease their ancestors because the land is foreign owned.

The Current Land Situation in Botswana Towns and Villages

The current land situation in Botswana is that many people are in great need of land. This happens especially in the big villages and urban centers of Botswana. The problem is that the big growing towns are constantly swallowing up the neighbouring villages. Gaborone, which is one of the fastest growing towns in Africa, has swallowed the villages of Tlokweng, Mogoditshane, Gabane and Metsimotlhabe, which are in a radius of 15 kilometers of Gaborone. These villages have been declared urban areas. The result is that the farmers who own the land were requested by the Land Boards to surrender their lands to the Councils at a compensation fee. The farmers realized that the compensation fee was very low and they opted to sell the land to the people from Gaborone at their own prices which they considered reasonable. The rich are always the first to grab a lot of land, which they then develop into big houses to rent out. This has happened in Mogoditshane and Tlokweng villages. In Gabane, many people sold out the land but the Council has stopped the selling of land and went to the extent of demolishing the houses of the middle-class who had bought the land from the poor.

In a place called Tsolamosese (*which literally refers to 'undress yourself'*), Kweneng District Council destroyed many houses, most of which belonged to the poor who had sold their land very cheaply out of fear of it being sold to expatriates by the Council. The feeling amongst many people is that Botswana is gradually being economically controlled by the rich and the expatriates, who are enjoying the wealth of Botswana, while the Batswana themselves lack employment and the land is taken away from them. The land problem is echoed all over Botswana. The complaint is that the Land Boards delay in allocating land to the people, and many end up giving themselves land without the Councils' consent. The people who 'give themselves' land are always the poor whose lands had been given to the rich cattle farmers.

Many Government critics in Botswana have pointed out that the Botswana elites have adopted a capitalist policy of obtaining land for themselves and accumulating wealth (Parsons, 1981). The rich politicians blame the traditional system where the chiefs held land on behalf of the people, as undemocratic. These rich people obtain land themselves from the people, not on entrustment, but as self-aggrandizement and the greed for wealth. When the government wanted to promote agricultural production through extensive farming, many rich people who had tractors went to the extent of cheating the poor in the name of share crop farming, so that the poor could hand over their lands to the rich, who in turn ploughed large tracts of land and claimed millions of Pula from Government. Many such lands were not taken care of and the result was that the expected returns could not materialize when the rich had spent the money on other projects to diversify their businesses. The land problem is very serious in Botswana.

The Mission and the Role of the Church in the Allocation of Land in Southern Africa

The Early Beginnings

The earliest Southern African contact with Christianity could be dated to the arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1652 (Sales, 1970). These Dutch settlers came with Christianity as their religion and they did not see the need to evangelize the indigenous peoples. They could assimilate the few Hottentots who were their servants. There was no distinction between the church and the state. A church minister was regarded as a civil servant whose duty was to minister to the sick and was actually referred to as a sick-comforter. It was only in 1737 that real mission work began in South Africa with the arrival of the Moravian missionaries. George Schmidt founded the Baviaanskloof Mission where he ministered to the Hottentots. The mission work expanded to Genadendal where some good work materialized (Sales 1979; Du Plessis, 1911).

The issue at hand is that the first thing which the missionaries needed was land to accommodate the landless whose lands were confiscated by the continuously expanding Dutch settlers in need of farming land. The situation in Southern Africa became more dramatic with the arrival of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in the field. The LMS missionaries are the most famous and popular in Southern Africa because of their struggles for land with the Boers in order to obtain some land for the displaced black people.

The arrival of Van der Kemp in 1799 ushered in a new era of missionary work in Southern Africa. Van der Kemp is famous for his work amongst the Xhosas and his famous place, Bethelsdorp, where he fought for the rights of the Hottentots.

The main issue of concern had always been land and forced labour. Vanderkemp denied the Boer farmers access to Bethelsdorp and remained in peace with the Hottentots by pro-

tecting them from forced labour. Vanderkemp was soon followed by John Philip, whose challenges to the Cape Government made drastic changes in the history of Southern Africa. John Philip served the LMS from 1819 to his death in 1851 (Sales, 1971). He was the most hated missionary by the Boers because of his struggles for the land rights of the black people. It is John Philip who forced the South African Government of the time to sign treaties with chiefs so that there should be no interference with their lands. The major characteristic of his mission work was the acquisition of land to resettle the displaced people. As a result, mission villages were developed and they catered for the needs of the displaced people. It is, however, a regrettable fact that most of what appeared to be good mission work did not bring good results. Modern church historical studies are very critical of the mission villages and the general role played by the church in the general political and economic developments in South Africa. Here I refer specifically to two substantial works that have examined critically and objectively the roles played by the church in human relations in South Africa and the land problem. These are the works of John de Gruchy (1979) and Charles Villa-Vincencio (1988). These works shed some light on the land issue and the church, and how these contributed to the political and economic situation of South Africa until its independence in 1994. Many works have been written on the land issue in South Africa and there are many scholars who are experts in this area. My focus shall be on Botswana, with which I believe I am more familiar.

The Missionaries and Botswana

The influence of John Philip penetrated into present Botswana through the work of LMS missionaries such as Robert Moffatt and David Livingstone. Around 1820 Robert Moffatt settled at Kuruman amongst the Batlhaping. The Kuruman mission became a great attraction all over Southern Africa as a centre of learning and refuge. Land was very important and Moffatt protected the land from the attacks of the Matantees and the Zulus of Mzilikazi. He went to the extent of establishing friendships with Mzilikazi to avoid attack and the taking away of the land (Du Plessis, 1911).

By 1842 David Livingstone had settled amongst the Bakwena. His main concern was to protect the land from the attacks of the Boers. Many historians have recorded the fact that many chiefs in Botswana and elsewhere in Africa have always wanted missionaries on their lands in order to have some protection from the attacks of foreigners and for the need of education and trade. In Botswana the Bangwato of Khama and the Batawana needed missionaries for the purposes of protection and trade and education (Hepburn, 1970; Tlou, 1985).

The work of many LMS missionaries in Botswana, such as John Mackenzie, Hepburn and WC Willoughby, showed great interest in securing the sovereignty of the Batswana by making all efforts to save their land from the Boer invaders (Sillery, 1965). This led to the birth of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885. The whole purpose of asking for protection was to save the land which is and had always been the source of life to all humanity. Land is the source of life and it is an unalienable right of every person in any community. The Protectorate Government, using the powers of the chiefs, maintained the strong belief that land belonged to the people and that the chief was the ultimate authority on the allocation and use of land. A great change took place, however, after independence in 1966. It is in this general context and concept of land that this paper should be read and understood.

The Role and Mission of the Church in the Allocation of Land in Botswana

The traditional Botswana land policy is very similar to that of the Old Testament, and the story of Naboth's vineyard suits very well the land policies of Botswana. The example of Naboth's was cited by Chief Khama when he refused to offer more land to the missionaries. Cecil Rhodes saw Botswana as Naboth's vineyard because of it being a corridor between South Africa and Zimbabwe (Sillery, 1965). His intention was to annex Botswana to South Africa to act as a corridor to his empire in Zimbabwe. This was met with great opposition, which resulted in the request for protection from the British Government.

The argument is that in any developmental programmes, the religious values of the people should be considered seriously. Although religion could be regarded as a deterrent to development because of its conservatism (Flanagan, 1995), religion still poses great problems to modernity. Religious beliefs, which are always associated with superstition, have been proved scientifically to have a great healing effect in the minds and bodies of the believers (Coe, 1978). Schoffeleers (1978) has showed the role played by religious cults all over Africa. The influence of such cults exists even today when politicians and economists talk in terms of the global village. In religious circles, there is nothing like a global village, because people do not have the same experiences of God.

The poor Batswana, like Naboth, are very unhappy with their land that is disappearing from them and being given or purchased by foreigners who control the economy of Botswana. Marger (1981:2) has this to say:

All of us occupy certain positions on the social hierarchy and thus enjoy more or less of our society's rewards: Wealth, prestige, justice, education, health and so on. This unequal distribution of rewards is an outcome which is not the result only, or even mainly, of our individual efforts and capacities. Instead it is determined in largest part by the process of societal politics – most simply, the interplay of power, for this is what politics is basically about. To understand our place in the social scheme, we must understand the society's institutions of power – what they are, how they work, and who makes their vital decisions.

Many critics argue that the formation of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which is currently running the government of Botswana, was to cater for the interests of the chiefs and the rich in line with the system of indirect rule as practiced by the Colonial Power. To a large extent, this observation is proving itself true when one considers the issue of land and cattle ownership in Botswana. Picard (1987:237) says:

As Botswana's rural development policy has unfolded since 1970, conflicts of interests between large cattle owners and the majority of the rural population have been increasing. A rural income distribution survey taken in 1974–1975 showed that the non-cattle owning households comprised about 45% of all rural households, or just over one-third actually were engaged in agriculture. Forty percent of the rural households owned up to 50 herd each, accounting for one-fourth of the national herd, and the remaining 15% of the population, the large cattle owners, owned 75% of the national herd.

This discrepancy in cattle goes hand in hand with the allocation of land. The accumulation of cattle by the few led to the continued dispossession of cattle from the poor. The result has been that many people who lost their cattle moved to the growing cities and towns in search of employment. The result is the over-crowding of the towns and the squatter problem which has been discussed above, relating to the self-allocation of land in Tsolamosese and other places in the major towns and cities. In the cattle post areas themselves, the rich also introduced bars and bottle stores and *chibuku* depots, so that their herdsmen and women should not earn any money, but return it to the rich through buying beer from them.

In some cases, many herdsmen are paid with tobacco and beer. The result is that many, who become cautious of this exploitation, leave the cattle posts and come to join the landless in the towns and cities of Botswana.

Two studies done on the Ghanzi Freehold Farms by Mogalakwe (1985) and Nteta and Hermans (1997), have pointed out the inhuman conditions under which the farm labourers live. In addition, Mogalakwe has also pointed out that the resettlement scheme of the government has not been successful. Many resettled Basarwa go back to the farms in search of food and to visit their displaced kin. There is also a movement from the settlements into the urban areas and big villages, in search of work.

Mogalakwe has observed that the measurements of the resettlement areas are 20km by 20km with the biggest being 25km by 25km. These sizes are in actual fact the same size as a farm given to one rich cattle owner. The land in the resettlement area is communally owned. The nature of the terrain is unsuited to crop farming, especially by people who had never been used to such a lifestyle. Secondly, the cattle that are given by government cannot survive in that small area. The result is extreme poverty. As a result of this, unprecedented population rises have taken place in the towns of Botswana and the large villages.

Studies done on migration in Botswana (*Migration in Botswana*, Vol 1–3, 1982) show that many young people migrate to the towns at a very high percentage. These are people aged between 14 and 35 years and they come from all areas, villages and cattle posts or the lands. The study has also showed that agricultural production is becoming very poor in Botswana. This is contrary to the argument that was presented in favour of the Land Act. It has been observed that families that have one of their members engaged in some form of full employment have a very low yield in agricultural production, or they do not plough at all, nor have any cattle. On the other hand, families who have several members employed and earning a good income, do have cattle and even deliver good agricultural production. What the study has concluded as a preliminary observation is that in Botswana, employment opportunities are creating a situation where salary or income has the tendency of replacing agricultural production. The dependence on salary is becoming the norm in Botswana and this is contributing to the loss of land as the rich take advantage of the poor who leave their lands and flock to the towns.

The Relevance of the Naboth Model to the Land Policies of Botswana

When the Naboth model increase in the number of people who come to the towns. These people settle in squatter areas where they invest the little that they have, and in the final analysis their houses are destroyed to create more room for the rich. Secondly, the Government budgeting is highly affected by the situation. It is very difficult for any government to budget for an unstable population growth.

The Mission of the Church

The first church to come to Botswana was the London Missionary Society (LSM). In its introduction of Christianity to the Batswana, it followed the missionary model that has been discussed above, which always seeks for land to build mission villages. In Botswana, however, the situation was different from that of South Africa. The Batswana lived in big villages under their chiefs. When the missionaries came, they asked for land to build churches, schools and clinics or hospitals. In some cases, they even asked for large pieces of land which they used for farming purposes. The idea of a mission was a self-sufficient community. Thus land was an important aspect of the mission of the church. A modern critic done

by Maluleke (*Missionalia*, 1993:239) shows how missionaries of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa (EPSCA) contributed to the formation of the Tsonga tribe. Maluleke argues thus:

The mission station methodology invites other missiological problems and challenges. It is essentially a program of drawing converts out of their communities and cultures, creating little 'colonies' of Christians, who would hopefully shine and become the salt of their world.

This is a clear example of the use of land in the mission of the church and how such use could be beneficial, or bring future problems to the people. In Botswana there is no such serious problem arising from missionary owned land, except for a few examples. The current situation is that the Balete are competing with the Government for a farm that is adjacent to Gaborone. Part of the land was given to the Roman Catholic Church to use as a cattle farm. The church sold part of it to the Government. The Government now wants to get the remaining land from the tribe, which is very hesitant to accept the offer. The tribe wants to develop the land for its own use. To Government, the land is like Naboth's vineyard because its acquisition would lead to a wide expansion of the city of Gaborone. In 1980 there was a small dispute over the old mission station in Serowe, which ended when the youth of the church proposed a good use of the old station. It is now one of the preserved sites of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA), Synod of Botswana.

These examples point out very difficult positions faced by the church. The church has become one of the land owners in Botswana, and possibly in the rest of Southern Africa. The region as a whole is faced by land problems in the towns and cities, which lead to squatters. The squatter problem is also a challenge to the church, which historically had always taken care of such displaced people.

Challenges to the Mission of the Church

In Botswana, however, the church is a very quiet institution and does not say much on the issues of land. The silence of the church has two causes: That the church itself is a land owner, and always needs more land for its expansions; secondly, Botswana is a secular state and it is always cautioning the church to know where it belongs, and that it should not take part in politics. The powers that are given to the Registrar by the Societies Act of 1972 allow him or her to refuse to register or remove from the register any society that he or she feels does not comply with its aims, or whose aims are suspect. The churches are silenced by these powers. The church in Botswana is therefore faced by several challenges.

The first problem is that in Botswana Christianity has been accepted as the religion of the people and the yardstick for moral judgments. Secondly, the church in Botswana has always been aligned with government, because it has always been controlled by the chiefs. The current problem is that the church has no theology to address the problems posed by modernity, and it still holds onto its conservative approach to mission, where in the tradition of the Book of James, Christianity is regarded as a moral law or code. Thirdly, the church in Botswana is struggling to disentangle itself from government tutelage.

The current mission of the church demands a closer look at its conservatism in a life of poverty in the midst of wealth. This challenge calls for a serious reconstruction of the church theologically and doctrinally. The challenge to the church regarding land has been made by Bakare. Land has made the people of Israel to be a people. It is the highest expression of humanity. According to Bakare, land must never be alienated from any human being because it is the means of individual and human identity. It is a gift from God to humanity and it must never be alienated from an individual human being, a family, a clan and

even a tribe or nation. The calling of the church in Botswana and Southern Africa is to make sure that human beings have access to land as a gift from God and the highest expression of humanity. The commercialization of land by governments, at the expense of the people, should be opposed by the church.

The early missionaries condemned many African values and practices as evil and barbarous. The present church in Botswana should not echo these traditional teachings of the missionary church without addressing the social issues and problems that breed such immorality as understood by conservative Christianity. The current economic situations in Botswana and Southern Africa call for a serious consideration of church and religious values. Modernity seriously challenges the Botswana view of marriage as the basis of family life and the proper venue for any form of sexual relationship. Molokomme (1991) has observed that the attitudes of both parents and youth towards the value of marriage, has changed. Gulbrandsen (1994) speaks in terms of excess women in Botswana. This excess of women has seriously changed the social structures and values of the Batswana. Most of the people who can obtain any form of assistance from Government are mainly widowed women, whereas single parents do not have access to such assistance, even if they could have the land. Failure to obtain such assistance leads to their flocking to towns and engaging in prostitution or concubinage in order to survive. This poses serious problems to the conservative and state controlled church in Botswana, which cannot challenge social injustices.

The other challenge to the church is that it is a divided church in which members of the missionary founded churches are among the economically rich and influential, when members of the African Independent Churches (AICs) are associated with the underprivileged and the poor. The current economic and political situation of Botswana calls for a highly revived mission approach.

How can the Church Become Meaningful in its Society?

A brief historical account of the church in Southern Africa has been given above. Just like the old Bible, which still has meaning to the church, church history also shapes and guides the life of the church. The old missionaries in Botswana and Southern Africa have jealously guarded the land, and made sure that every person had access to land. Where there was shortage of land like in South Africa, the church itself acquired land for its converts. This might sound awkward for our day, but the fact remains that the church has to cater for its converts, not only spiritually but also materially.

It has been stated above that the early Dutch church was not concerned about converting the Africans, but interested in gaining land for its people to improve agricultural production. The church in Botswana has become a regretting church, instead of a dynamic church, that should look back into its history and find new and relevant means of being relevant to the needs of its people. There is no way in which the church can detach itself from the pleas of the people of Tsolamosese and other places in Botswana where the poor have had their shelters removed. Throughout the missionary era, Botswana was a rural economical based country. The missionaries encouraged self-reliance by establishing a holistic approach to education, where boys and girls were not only taught to read and write, but also carpentry, sewing and knitting and other economic generating professions such as agriculture and gardening. The present church in Botswana has left education to government, which has put emphasis on *white collar* jobs, at the expense of manual labour which forms the basis of

human life. The church is facing serious problems of faith in a free and secular society whose ethics is 'survival at all costs.'

General Conclusions

The story of Naboth as recorded in 1 Kings 21:1–29, illustrates the situation in Botswana and its consequences. King Ahab wishes to exchange or buy the vineyard of Naboth. Naboth refuses because of the sacred nature and value of the land as an ancestral property. In like manner, our land boards in Botswana are always after any portions of land that are not in use. Such land is always needed by the rich, who will always appeal to the Land Act in order to obtain the piece of land they want. Unfortunately for the poor, who always have land which they cannot develop, their land is taken away from them. The starting point of this paper indicated the sacred nature and value of land as an unalienable right. This is basically a religious understanding of land. The Botswana Government is a secular government which tolerates religion and gives freedom of worship to religious bodies. It does not in any way align itself with any religion. In making its laws, the Botswana state does not appeal to religious morality of any kind. Some members of Parliament may be Christians, but their decisions in law-making are not based on Christian morality. Thus, on matters of land allocation and acquisition, religion is not at all considered. The result has been the dispossession of the poor and the accumulation of wealth by the rich. This state of affairs poses a great challenge to the mission of the church.

Following the missionary examples cited at the beginning of this paper, it is important for the church to have a voice on the issues of land. The Christian religion, which arose from an Old Testament background, believes in a world that is governed by God. Such a world is one that seeks justice and love for the neighbour. Love to the neighbour is shown through sharing God's wealth and creating a community where the needy will be supported by the well-off. Any misuse of God's property leads to punishment from God.

The Botswana case is just an example of what is happening all over Southern Africa. In South Africa the land issue is currently a very serious one. In Zimbabwe land is being confiscated by the ex-combatants with the support of Government. The question is: How far is the church involved to make sure that the land does not end up in a few hands, leading to more poverty in the midst of plenty, as is the case in Botswana? There is no doubt that the church played a great role in the liberation of both South Africa and Zimbabwe. Will the church still be prophetic when the theologians who fought for political freedom, have now become part of the Government? The argument of this paper is that the church must rise and adapt itself to changes, by fighting and acquiring land for the poor and pronouncing God's judgment upon those who accumulate land at the expense of the poor.

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