

Church Land Reform through a Combination of Examples and Theology of Spatial Justice

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Abstract

Land was one of the ways the colonialist venture as well as the apartheid regime used to divide people, as well as being a catalyst for superiority. Over hundreds of years, from the beginning of colonial rule until the end of apartheid in 1994, the indigenous people of South Africa were dispossessed from the land. With the end of the Truth and Reconciliation proceedings, it was clear from suggested actions that there should be restitution in South Africa to begin to correct the spatial and resultant economic imbalances. Churches in South Africa embarked on setting declarations on land reform ecumenically and within their own walls. However, little information is available on final reform measures that churches have taken after several ecumenical meetings in the 1990s. Additionally, there is little development in South African theology circles on a theology of land justice. Moreover, a praxis on land justice for churches has not been openly developed or discussed post-1994. This study aims to look at the history of the land issue in South Africa, particularly from 1948–1994, and will include the history of land ownership in the Roman Catholic tradition. In addition, it will look at examples of land reform in the Roman Catholic Church from 1999 until the present in the Diocese of Mariannhill. Furthermore, the article will consider the emerging praxis of spatial justice based on a hermeneutic view taken from black liberation and contextual theology. The article concludes with a look at how these examples and new praxis can develop the ecumenical church's quest for a prophetic voice and actions in South African land reform.

Keywords: land reform; church; spatial justice

The History of the Land Question in South Africa

In the current discourse on land, there are numerous writings on the history of land dispossession in South Africa. This crisis is deeply entwined with economic and social



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injustice in South Africa. People have been forced to live in spaces where there is not enough land to cultivate or develop economic growth (Southern African Anglican Theological Commission [SAATC] 1999, 6–16). Most of these people are of colour. The land crisis has a connection to the history of colonialism and domination, where (white) settlers dispossessed the indigenous people of the region (SAATC 1999, 6–16). The struggle for justice and land has been tied together in the region over the last few centuries (SAATC 1999, 6–16).

With the development of legal separation, especially during the apartheid era, many policies and laws were developed that disenfranchised the indigenous African people. There was the 1913 Land Act, with land set apart for the indigenous people, that was a fraction of land set apart for white people (SAATC 1999, 6–16). There were also forced removals from the 1950s to 1980s, where the indigenous people were forcibly removed from areas marked for white people (SAATC 1999, 6–16).

Resistance to the 1913 Land Act featured strongly in the African National Congress (ANC) (Philpott 2004, 7). The historic Freedom Charter addressed the land questions by iterating that land should be shared, that restrictions of land ownership based on race should be abolished and freedom of movement should be guaranteed (Philpott 2004, 7). However, by the time the ANC was negotiating the shape of the new South Africa at the CODESA negotiations, there was a shift away from the social democratic outlook indicated in the Freedom Charter (Philpott 2004, 8). Being the ruling party, the ANC began to look at maintaining economic stability and shied away from its original radical land redistribution policy (Philpott 2004, 10).

Some believe that the delivery of land reform in democratic South Africa has not been entirely satisfactory, with targets for redistribution and “restitution having not been met and institutional capacity to deliver not being built” (Philpott 2004, 11). With the pervasive protection of private property law and defence of market-based approaches, the government indicates a desire to offer land reform while not disrupting profit accumulation (Philpott 2004, 11).

Seeking Spatial Justice: What it is, where it came from and how it Manifests in South Africa

This article will explore in depth the concept “spatial justice” in order to show how churches can use this concept along with examples of church land reform to develop their own land reform journey.¹ In order to fully explain the theory of spatial justice for the workings of this paper, I need to dive deeper into the concept of spatial justice, its origins in a spatial turn in academic areas and its manifestation in the South African context. Let me begin with the spatial turn that has taken hold of the academic world across disciplines in multiple contexts. Edward Soja is a distinguished professor of

1 This article is extracted from the author’s thesis for a Master’s degree in Theology, submitted in October 2019.

urban planning at the University of California, Los Angeles (Soja 2010, back cover). He is also the writer of the book *Seeking Spatial Justice*, a popular document which greatly covers the concept of spatial justice. Soja argues that spatial justice is not an alternative to other forms of justice, but rather shows a particular perspective (Soja 2010, 13). He calls the unprecedented diffusion of critical spatial thinking across subject areas a “spatial turn” (Soja 2010, 13). Additionally, he speaks of a critical spatial perspective that drives this spatial turn (Soja 2010, 3). He explains that the critical spatial perspective can be described as the explanatory power of the consequential geographies of justice (Soja 2010, 3). Simply put, the critical spatial perspective is the understanding that geography and space are not abstract things or concepts but are affected by, and also influence social and political processes. Soja explains that in earlier times, space and spatiality were only given attention in certain disciplines, mainly geography, architecture, urban and regional planning and urban sociology (Soja 2010, 14). However, in today’s academic realm it has spread to fields like anthropology and cultural studies, law and social studies, Bible studies, race theory, queer theory, and many others (Soja 2010, 14).

With this said, I now move ahead to the development of a spatial consciousness in Bible studies and in particular, black theology in South Africa. Theologian Vuyani Vellem states that there is an emerging view of land in relation to blackness or Africanness (Vellem 2016, 1). He begins the conversation by attempting to bring an understanding of the foundation of black theology of liberation especially with regard to land (Vellem 2016, 1). He brings in another academic mind’s thoughts on land in black theology, quoting Takatso Mofokeng’s words, “Land is life!” (Mofokeng in Vellem 2016, 1). Vellem (2016, 1) articulates that in Africa, land is seen as sacred, spiritual, and cultural. Also, land is an essential part of the whole pattern of life, which cannot be separated into compartments or spheres in the African ethical view of life (Vellem 2016, 1). However, after colonisation, the African view on land has been scarred and almost dismantled (Vellem 2016, 1).

Vellem’s thoughts on a black land theology are based on the conviction that the church in his country of South Africa has the opportunity to develop a prophetic voice in the story of land (Vellem 2016, 2). The church should “come out of the mission station and be prophetic” (Vellem 2016, 2). Also, Vellem covers the chasm between “white” privileged churches and “black” marginalised churches (Vellem 2016, 3). Furthermore, there should be a commitment to a particular historical plan for the liberation of the marginalised and the poor (the black [wo]man in the South African context) (Vellem 2016, 2). Moreover, he says that there is no response or solution for the land question (the question of imbalanced land ownership and history of dispossession in South Africa) without the acknowledgement of black African values in the re-imagining of land in a democratic South Africa (Vellem 2016, 2). So, Vuyani Vellem’s work, which aims to look at the characteristics of a theology of land (particularly in South Africa) underpinned by black theology of liberation, gives us a view of a rise in critical spatial perspective.

I now move on to spatial justice and injustice. One has to start by looking at the creation of unjust geographies/spaces for grounding the search for spatial justice. Focusing on certain examples of unjust spaces and how injustice can take place spatially, helps to ground the search for spatial justice in real-life contexts (Soja 2010, 31). The system of spatial or territorial control associated with the racist apartheid regime is the ultimate example of cultural domination and oppression, arising from spatial processes of segregation and boundary making (Soja 2010, 39). Apartheid involved the creation of separate administration for the white elite, in mostly well-developed areas, and the assignment of the majority African population to the less arable, less developed and peripheral spaces (Soja 2010, 39).

With this example, it can be seen that injustice has been and continues to be reflected in spatial terms. Across the world, from Europe to the streets of South Africa, one can see that unjust geographies are developed and withheld. Now, in the knowledge of this, one can move to delve into the theory of bringing justice into these spaces and what this looks like in the theological sphere.

Spatial justice has its foundation in this statement: “Human spatiality in all its forms and expressions is socially produced” (Soja 2010, 103). It can be said that we make our spaces, justly or unjustly in the same way we make histories (Soja 2010, 103). Knowing that geographies and histories are socially produced and not simply bestowed on us as an Act of God, we can also be aware that the spaces we live in can have positive or negative effects (Soja 2010, 104). These spaces can be used to develop inclusivity and diverse societies, equal opportunity and to empower citizens. It can also be used to oppress, disenfranchise and exclude people who may not “belong.” Space is a powerful shaping force in society and in every context (Soja 2010, 104). So, if spaces are socially produced and are created by human actions, then they can also be positively transformed by human agency (Soja 2010, 104). With all this in mind, spatial justice can be seen simply as the pursuit of just spaces that have positive effects for those who exist in and out of these spaces. It is the search for spaces that include rather than exclude, bringing positivity instead of negativity. This search can be done by people across the world. One of the people who have explored the concept of spatial justice in their life work, is Stephan de Beer.

Stephan de Beer is the director for the Centre for Contextual Ministry at the University of Pretoria (Centre for Contextual Ministry 2019). His journey to becoming an academic started at the University of Pretoria where he studied theology in the late 1980s (De Beer 2019). De Beer was sure from a young age that he would study theology; however, he knew he would not be a priest or pastor (De Beer 2019). During the end throes of his studies, there were kids living on the streets in the then all-white suburb of Sunnyside (De Beer 2019). A Full Gospel Church moved to the University of Pretoria to become a student church, freeing up a building in his area to be used (De Beer 2019). He, alongside two friends, started an overnight shelter in the vacated building housing the homeless kids in his area (De Beer 2019). In these last pangs of apartheid, the young

homeless men represented the beginning of the end to the neighbourhood (De Beer 2019). White business and police were very angry, and the student activists received lots of police harassment (De Beer 2019). On one fateful night, the building was burnt down (De Beer 2019). De Beer believes it was arson, but this was never officially proven (De Beer 2019). Unfortunately, a few young men died in the fire (De Beer 2019). Interestingly, local churches were very involved in funding food and so forth for the young men before the fire; however, once the building had burnt down all the churches (except one Charismatic Church) were nowhere to be found (De Beer 2019). This started a series of questions from De Beer, about “who God is”; what “church” is; and how Christians are supposed to be “church” (De Beer 2019). His first thoughts on justice developed from this life-changing event (De Beer 2019). After this period in his life, De Beer went to the city of Chicago for some postgraduate work (De Beer 2019). Once he returned to South Africa, he had a vision, along with six churches who wanted to help develop a new story in inner-city Pretoria (De Beer 2019). De Beer started an independent organisation in 1993, with the covering of these churches, called Pretoria Community Ministries (De Beer 2019). This is now called Tshwane Leadership Foundation (De Beer 2019). The organisation had people who had resources and started projects like woman shelters, projects for the homeless and many more (De Beer 2019). Out of this organisation came Yeast City Housing in 1998 (De Beer 2019). There were a number of things that prompted this housing project (De Beer 2019). One of these is the need for affordable social housing for those who worked but could not afford market housing (De Beer 2019). There seemed to be a gap between life shelter housing and housing on the market (De Beer 2019). Secondly, the withdrawal of white capital caused buildings to be ill kept, with rents being collected without upgrades to buildings in the inner city (De Beer 2019).

In this 30-year journey, De Beer (2019) says the concept of “spatial justice” was learnt “on the way.” The journey through white flight along with white capital, which brought negative effects to inner-cities across the country, was one aspect of learning (De Beer 2019). Also, working with communities that have poorer people who work in them, but where none of these working class lives in, developed a consciousness of negative effects through space (De Beer 2019).

It is the experience of what is wrong with space and what could be done to transform it that has developed De Beer’s consciousness of space. Being an experienced worker in transforming spaces, De Beer has an experience-based theology of spatial justice, which he details in previous writings. This suggests theology is one way that can be used by churches, alongside their spatial consciousness, in order to develop life-giving spaces.

The theological agenda for spatial justice could be one that restores relationships with self, others, land and God (De Beer 2016). This would mean real and sustained reconciliation in the land of South Africa (De Beer 2016).

In conclusion, space is not an abstract area with no effects on it. Rather, it is determined and constructed socially, economically and politically. This thought process and conceptualisation of space is not written and recorded ubiquitously, and is still emerging among academics and civil society. However, it is clear that spatial consciousness and spatial justice are concepts grounded in real life and cannot be ignored, especially by faith communities like churches. How could churches in South Africa be part of the story of giving life and transforming spaces that have been negatively affected socially, economically and politically? The development of spatial consciousness and a theological agenda for spatial justice play a key part. Another big part is looking at what others in the faith have done. One such example is in the Roman Catholic Church in the diocese of Mariannhill. To this example we now turn.

Roman Catholic Church's Land Story in South Africa

In the South African church environment, the Roman Catholic Church is a formidable organisation. The Catholic Church's primary objective was to open mission stations among the African people (Brain 1997, 197). Bishop Allard was told that he was sent to Natal to "... convert the Zulus" (Brain 1997, 197). In 1854, Allard assigned two young priests to learn English and Zulu and dispatched them to open the first mission to the Zulus (Brain 1997, 198). They lived in a Zulu settlement and tried to pick up the language (Brain 1997, 198). Allard attempted to evangelise in southern Natal, but failed and moved onto the adjacent area, namely Lesotho (Brain 1997, 198).

In the Eastern Cape, Ricards expressed strong views about mission work to indigenous peoples and criticised the London Mission Society for not promoting hard work and responsibility (Brain 1997, 198). On a visit to Europe, when he was looking for a congregation to work in his new diocese, he found the Trappists, who lived a life of prayer and manual labour (Brain 1997, 198). He invited the Trappists to establish a model farm in his vicariate, where indigenous people could learn the Christian faith and effective work (Brain 1997, 198–99). The Trappists initially settled near the Sundays River in 1880, but suffered a drought and two years later they informed Ricards they would move to Natal (Brain 1997, 199). This decision to move to Natal would lead to far-reaching growth of Catholic missionary work (Brain 1997, 199). The Trappists, under Father Franz Pfanner, bought a large farm near Pinetown, which he named Mariannhill, developing it with the help of lay brothers and erecting substantial buildings in a German style (Brain 1997, 199). By 1898, with 285 monks, Mariannhill had become the largest abbey in the world (Brain 1997, 199).

The Catholic Church, as mentioned above, acquired most of its land in Natal during the colonisation period (Wilkinson 2004, 89). The diocese of Mariannhill, which became the largest landowner of any Catholic diocese in South Africa, was mostly acquired by the Trappists (whose history in the country was mentioned earlier) (Wilkinson 2004, 89). Wilkinson (2004, 82) says that the issue of land ownership and utilisation is linked to the apartheid system and the exploitative economic system that operates in rural areas. In the creation of a Benevolent Empire, the Catholic Church created an uneven,

discriminatory land ownership dynamic on land that it owned in Natal (Brain 1997, 195–211).

The Roman Catholic Church had a role in the land dispossession of Africans in South Africa, whether it was intentional about this role or not. It, alongside the South African Council of Churches, made declarations on the effects of apartheid and declared support of land reform. But how did its implementation of the declarations go? Was the implementation frustrated? Or did it do more than just talk?

When telling the Mariannhill land reform story, one can see that the diocese has been a major landowner. In the end, the diocese partnered with Mariannhill Land Reform and Rural Development Programme to facilitate the transfer of eight farms with an estimated total extent of 2 500 hectares and to support sustainable land use, and most farms have been transferred with land projects initiated (Philani Mkhize, email to author, June 6, 2018). But what is the human story behind the land reform journey? What are the thoughts of some of the people involved?

Philani Mkhize was appointed the Justice and Peace Coordinator in the Roman Catholic Church in 1994 (Mkhize 2019). During this time, there were numerous talks on human rights as South Africa moved into being a democratic country, and Mkhize's role in the church's talks on this matter was important (Mkhize 2019). As he visited parishes, he found that land questions kept arising from congregants in the church (Mkhize 2019). According to Mkhize, this influenced the Diocese of Mariannhill to seriously look into land reform measures (Mkhize 2019). The then bishop, the late Bishop Paul Themba Mngoma, in collaboration with the late Father Dieter Gallan from the Mariannhill monastery, began this process (Mkhize 2019). Mkhize, initially a part of the Justice and Peace Programme, was hired to work with an expatriate from Germany who was responsible for the land programme's oversight (Mkhize 2019). His role was then to be the programme's coordinator in 1999 (Mkhize 2019). He was in this role until 2004 (Mkhize 2019).

The work involved organising the communities living on the land, communicating the bishop's decision to start the programme and beginning to liaise and contact the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) (now known as the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform) (Mkhize 2019). He needed to create linkages between the diocese and the DLA and initiate a combined effort with the DLA and donate the land instead of participating in the "willing buyer, willing seller" mode of transfer (Mkhize 2019). According to Mkhize, there were many moments that marked the programme's journey, with some frustrating moments and some great moments (Mkhize 2019). Mkhize (2019) describes the work with the DLA as unpleasant. However, they worked through the relationship by speaking with NGOs in the land sector to exchange ideas (Mkhize 2019). A remarkable moment came in 2003, four years after the beginning of the programme, when Mkhize oversaw the transfer of the first property that was part of the programme, which is the Reichenau property (Mkhize

2019). At the beginning of the process, the community was excited (Mkhize 2019). Accordingly, the transfer of Reichenau was met with celebration (Mkhize 2019). After 2004, Mkhize left the office; however, after he left more properties were transferred with different coordinators (Mkhize 2019).

The Reichenau property is about two hours away from Pietermaritzburg and can be found on the drive toward a town called Underberg. The land is vast, with its own road system and the community's houses are spread out on this vast land. As part of this paper, the author visited a number of community leaders and residents on the redistributed Reichenau land. The condition of the land seen on this journey was not good. The land appears to be arable, however, even though it is vast there is no noticeable farming activity happening on the land.

The researcher interviewed three participants to gather historical data about the Reichenau property. Respondent 1 began with a historical context to the land. He stated that in 1886, the Germans (assumably the Trappists) asked the then chief to build a school on the land. The church then built on the land. Once the reform project ended, about 1 000 hectares were redistributed to the communities living on it. However, there is an additional 800 hectares of land that still has a query over it (Anonymous Respondent 1 2019). Bishop Mngoma passed away and another bishop was instated, who, according to the first respondent, did not know the context of the project. The church then leased some of the queried land after 2006 on a 15-year lease (Anonymous Respondent 1 2019). The first respondent saw this as outside the ambit of what should have been done. He believes that the bishop should verify any assets on that queried land and be true to their original agreement of redistributing all land at Reichenau (Anonymous Respondent 1 2019).

Respondent 2 was born and grew up on the Reichenau land. Moreover, she remembers the church laying down the law on land affairs prior to the reform project (Anonymous Respondent 2 2019). Respondent 2 stated that it was the government who initiated the project and had told the church that it needed to give this land back. A committee of community leaders was then formed for administrative purposes (Anonymous Respondent 2 2019). Respondent 2 further stated that she joined later in the project committee. She mentions that she had joy in having independence on the land; however, she was also nervous as they had not been in control before. Despite this joy, she feels there is no difference in their lives except this ownership and independence. She believes the church should ask the community to be more involved in their day-to-day lives (Anonymous Respondent 2 2019). She also believes the church should have facilitated the money given to them (the church was given money by the DLA for the land, which was then given to the community to start agricultural activities) (Anonymous Respondent 2 2019).

Finally, I interviewed my lead contact. She mentioned that she is part of the new committee administrating the Reichenau land (Anonymous Respondent 3 2019). She

stated that the first committee was dissolved after it had been seen to be a part of the rental agreement for the land under dispute and benefited from this deal. The farming projects initiated on the land after the redistribution process had stopped (Anonymous Respondent 3 2019). Many issues arose, including the fence surrounding the farming land being stolen and not having enough equipment. Moreover, the machinery donated by the DLA stood still in respondent 1's home and had only been used by a few (Anonymous Respondent 3 2019).

The research interviews done at the Reichenau property revealed dynamics not expressed in the Catholic Church's audit or Mkhize's interview. There are marks of a feeling of failure from the respondents, who expressed more negatives than positives in their lives on the land. It can be deduced that the initial joy of having the land was replaced with disappointment that perhaps having the land did not bring the fullness they had hoped.

There are many questions as to why the success story the diocese has, does not match the disappointment of the community. However, what these stories tell is that even though the land was redistributed, the restoration of the community to their former glory before dispossession may not have been fully thought through.

What thought processes and actions can the ecumenical church take in order to create its own land reform journey and be a prophetic voice in South Africa?

Church Land Reform in the Future

The concept of spatial justice and this land reform example give rise to two things. These are lessons to take into other land reform measures and a possible theology of spatial justice. This theology will comprise the following anchors:

- Developing a spatial consciousness when looking at the Bible.
- Looking at life-giving acts around land in the Bible.

The first anchor, involving a development of spatial consciousness in Bible reading, is perhaps the most important one. In order to develop a theology of spatial justice, one needs to already have a reading of spaces in the library of books that informs the Christian faith. Without this, there are no thoughts on space in churches. A major thought process developed by a foundation of a spatially conscious reading of the Bible is the acknowledgment and analysis of God's commands and words on land, but also on the relationship between people and with God.

God's Words on Land

When looking at the Bible, one can see there are relations with regard to land. God's nation of Israel goes through a season of landlessness and landedness (as Walter

Brueggemann mentioned) (Brueggemann 2002). Also, there are land relations, which are made to oppress others in the Bible (as shown in the Exile period for the nation of Israel) (Brueggemann 2002). In order to build spatial consciousness of the Bible to form a possible theology of spatial justice, one would need to look at these land relations critically. One example of this is analysing God's words on land and land use in order to understand God's will on the matter as expressed in the Bible.

In the first book of the Bible (Crossway Bibles 2001) (Genesis 1:28), the triune God says: "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' "

God, as the Creator of the Earth, gives humanity rule over the earth and everything in it. God expresses a handover of power to humanity. However, in giving over this power there are some regulations. After God's formation of the nation of Israel from the descendent, the Exodus of the nation from Egypt occurs (Exodus 5–14). The nation of Israel travels in the wilderness, where God begins to share commands on land. In Leviticus 25 God begins to share on the Year of the Jubilee. This year, every 50th year in the land God has given them, is a year in which redemption is allowed; God allows the redemption of the poor and of the land. In Leviticus 25:25–34, God says this about the sale of land and land relations between Israelites in their land:

If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold. 26 If a man has no one to redeem it and then himself becomes prosperous and finds sufficient means to redeem it, 27 let him calculate the years since he sold it and pay back the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and then return to his property. 28 But if he does not have sufficient means to recover it, then what he sold shall remain in the hand of the buyer until the year of jubilee. In the jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his property. 29 If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, he may redeem it within a year of its sale. For a full year he shall have the right of redemption. 30 If it is not redeemed within a full year, then the house in the walled city shall belong in perpetuity to the buyer, throughout his generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. 31 But the houses of the villages that have no wall around them shall be classified with the fields of the land. They may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the jubilee. 32 As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites may redeem at any time the houses in the cities they possess. 33 And if one of the Levites exercises his right of redemption, then the house that was sold in a city they possess shall be released in the jubilee. For the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the people of Israel. 34 But the fields of pastureland belonging to their cities may not be sold, for that is their possession forever.

In these regulations God gives to his people, there are clear elements of land and human relations He wishes Israel to abide by. There is an element of keeping land fluid between Israelites with the concept of redemption of land in the Year of the Jubilee. Israelites are able to return to their previous land that they had owned and redeem it and take it back in this year. No land is to be sold in perpetuity. This is an interesting and bold

command. The idea that the children of God should rather allow return of land during the Year of the Jubilee, under fair purchase brackets based on the land's yield, is revolutionary. It is here I must detour and reflect on this revolutionary thinking. God shows no interest in building Israel into a nation that shows its power in oppressive and potent force. Rather, God is looking to them to have fluidity in their living, and for each Israelite to have dignity in their living experience. Here is the crux, which will show itself over and over again; God reflects land relations that maintain or restore dignity and the *imago Dei* of his people. Over and over He reminds them of their heritage as his people and, therefore, they must adhere to a standard of living that keeps each person dignified, even in their ownership of land.

Additionally, when looking at life-giving acts of community in the Bible, one should look at the early church and see how radical love and generosity can help lift the marginalised. Life-giving acts on land in the Bible can be found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, we see as mentioned above the nation of Israel having land divided equitably by God, giving life to all in the space they are promised. In the New Testament, we see the newly-formed Christian church develop actions of life after Pentecost. The church builds a horizontal type of living which removes imbalanced power relations in terms of assets and land. Acts 4:32–36 says:

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

In this group of individuals who believe in Jesus Christ and the power of his death and resurrection, these individuals rid themselves of their assets. They live in common with one another, with all assets radically shared among each other. This is a clear sign of a life-giving act. This act develops a community that lives in radical sharing that keeps all in space without fear, favour or discrimination. They are inspired to create their own economy where all have what they need and have no spatial power over others. These acts inspire life in terms of land and ownership and thus are an act toward spatial justice.

These two anchors are the holding posts for the suggested theology of spatial justice. The first anchor is being conscious of land and land relations in the Bible. Doing this can lead to the analysis of God's Word on space and land and what this could mean for churches' response today. The consciousness allows building thought processes on land based on the living Word. Also, examples of life-giving acts on land in the Bible can

inspire Christians today in their quest for spatial justice in the here and now. The anchors form a Christian thought process on spatial justice that can be used today.

But churches cannot use this theology alone. There are key lessons that can be learnt from land reform actions, like the actions the Roman Catholic Church took over the last two decades. These lessons can be a partner to the theology of spatial justice in empowering churches in their own land reform journey.

Lessons from the Roman Catholic Church Land Reform Journey

In the land reform journey for the Roman Catholic Church, there were numerous dynamics which affected the story holistically. From partnerships and the joy of transferring the land, to the community's concerns after the transfer, the journey has had some joys and difficulties. So what lessons can be found in the path the Catholic Church embarked on?

The first lesson can be learnt from what can be seen as the success of the Roman Catholic Mariannhill project, which is working with the government where possible. For the Mariannhill project, the Roman Catholic Church worked with the Department of Land Affairs. This working relationship developed the following key benefits:

- No payment of transfer fees (Mkhize 2019).
- No payment of surveying of the land (Mkhize 2019).
- Resources toward community mobilisation for the transfer (Mkhize 2019).

These benefits allowed the church to not have exorbitant costs when embarking on this journey. However, although there are benefits to working with the government, the work done in partnership with them should be a tool for advocating for better policy on land reform. The Roman Catholic Church had a long road with the government in their land reform journey. The bureaucracy made the journey longer than it needed to be (Mkhize 2019). The journey here, although with benefits, was prolonged by governmental sloth. This apathy can be seen in the government's track record with land reform in general. The Report of the High Level Panel on the Assessment of Key Legislation and the Acceleration of Fundamental Change, which was commissioned by the Executive of South Africa, also speaks to the failure of the governmental land reform programme (Report of the High Level Panel on the Assessment of Key Legislation and the Acceleration of Fundamental Change 2017, 202). Churches should be able to use their land reform projects as a tool to not only bring spatial justice but also re-imagine the land reform process. It should be used to advocate for a renewed land journey in government.

The second lesson learnt from the Diocese of Mariannhill project is that making radical decisions starts with radical conviction. As Philani Mkhize mentioned, the church had

heard rumblings of the land question across its congregations. After these rumblings, the church began to take heed and plan a way forward for a land reform journey. A theology of land or spatial justice did not exist (Mkhize 2019), however, the church took a bold step out of a conviction that it needed to reform its land. A lesson here is that there is no radical action without radical conviction. The conviction is needed to carry the cost.

The final lesson is that the journey is never finished and needs to be continued with communities long after the transfer documents are signed. The Diocese of Mariannhill completed their transfer of Reichenau. Currently, there are no wide-scale farming projects being done Reichenau (Anonymous Respondent 3 2019). What lesson can be learnt here? The lesson is that even after the transfer of land or other land reform efforts, there must be involvement in the project in order to assist the beneficiaries in this new life stage. Now, this assistance cannot look like patronage or control, but rather a helping hand ready to assist where beneficiaries ask or desire it.

Alongside creating a mindset that prioritises space for justice, the combination of a spatial justice theology and the lessons learnt from previous journeys creates a guideline on how spaces can be used to reflect justice. If churches want to create a foundation for their journey, they can use a possible theology of spatial justice. Also, these churches can use lessons learnt to create plans to audit land, create and maintain relationships with beneficiaries and work on the peripheries to serve policy growth and be a prophetic voice in society. In combination, the parts can be used to build a view of the future and a recipe for implementing their conviction.

Conclusion

A theology of spatial justice and examples of land reform among churches can create an outlook that prioritises spatial justice in the churches' work. A theology of spatial justice can keep God's word on spaces, and spaces in relation to human relations in one's consciousness. The lessons learnt from other journeys also lead to an emergence of a mindset that keeps space at the forefront as part of the social dynamics separating the powerful and powerless. Both these aspects allow churches to build consciousness of the spaces around them. They do this by showing spaces in the Living Word and what God says about them, but also what churches have done and can do with their spaces once they are aware of the spaces' power. Therefore, the combination of these creates a spatially conscious group of people that can embark on a land reform journey.

Alongside creating a mindset that prioritises space for justice, the combination of a spatial justice theology and the lessons learned from previous journeys creates a guideline on how spaces can be used to reflect justice. If churches want to create a foundation for their journey, they can use a possible theology of spatial justice. Also, these churches can use lessons learnt to create plans to audit land, create and maintain relationships with beneficiaries, and work on the peripheries to serve policy growth and be a prophetic voice in society. Together the parts can be used to build a view of the

future and a recipe for implementing their conviction. This is a way to work through the land question and find an outlook to create spatial justice. The crux of this article is this: the theology of spatial justice—alongside lessons from other churches’ reform journeys—gives a way toward churches’ answer to their own land questions.

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