

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL
TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL COMMUNITIES : A THEOLOGICAL
REFLECTION ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO CHURCH LAND USE IN NATAL

by

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Dedicated to my Mother,

MaZondi

and

my late Father,

Vika Johannes Mtetwa

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DECLARATION

I submit that unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, the whole thesis is my original work.

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ABSTRACT

The controversy around the land in South Africa seems permanent unless the socio-political transformation process vigorously redresses the historical inequalities and the discrepancies in property relations. Given the landlessness of the majority of the country's population and the legacy of land Apartheid, all stakeholders in the land acquisition, land ownership, land distribution and land use should take into serious account the implications for anything less than meeting the land needs of the majority. It is the objective of this study to investigate the contribution of the Church, as a unique social agent, to land use and development processes, particularly from its position as one of the mass property owners in the country.

SECTION A

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the problem

"Ownership of land is an issue of no small importance. Land is a basis of material and psychological security and the way in which the law determines a system of tenure is a matter of immediate consequence to all people. Land rights are frequently organized so as to achieve social, political and economic aims; and the group that is in a position to manipulate land rights is able to entrench its political hegemony" (1986: v).¹

The question of land ownership and land use is a central yet controversial issue. Particularly in South Africa it is a highly emotive issue given the historical politicisation of the whole land package. The present pattern of property relations and the uneven distribution of land premised upon racial categorization explains the sensitivity that surrounds the land question in South Africa. The argument that land is the quintessence of material and psychological security as is contended by Bennet is especially relevant when one closely examines the plight of rural communities and their absolute dependence upon land for their very existence. This

1.. Bennet, T.W. *et al.* (1986): *Land Ownership - Changing Concepts*.

view does not exclude the realities of urban property relations that in their own right warrant attention. It does though unequivocally highlight the urgency of issues at stake with respect to survival in the rural areas.

Furthermore, any potential development of the rural communities and even their socio-economic transformation, will have to deal with past acquisition and distribution of land; its ownership and its usage. Development and transformation of the rural peripheries should also allude to current trends of land reform with particular emphasis on the mechanism of land restoration and redistribution. I will argue that there cannot be any meaningful socio-political and agro-economic settlement for peaceful and harmonious coexistence in South Africa without the land issue being amicably resolved. As it is, given the current political climate in the country, most if not all political players, feature the land question prominently in their agendas.

I will contend also that the church has, to a large extent, remained ambivalent with regard to land ownership, land distribution and land use precisely because it has a stake in the land controversy. However, I will argue that the church in South Africa has a significant prophetic role to play in the transformation of rural communities, particularly with respect to land development. This is, among other reasons, because some churches have, in the course of settling missions stations in South Africa, acquired large tracts of land. With nation building and reconstruction of the

country imminently awaiting implementation, the church will have to shed its indifferent and self-exonerated stance regarding land use and demonstrate commitment to the resolution of the conflict around the land impasse. It should be committed to the enactment of justice and equity not only in the secular world but also among and within its own ranks. This in practice means introspectively reassessing perspectives of its own property. The land crisis is an issue of national magnitude and the church could be an active catalyst in facilitating its amicable resolution.

A sizeable constituency of the church has been consigned by the dynamics of Land Apartheid to squatting. I will argue that the church, of necessity, has to be a watchdog of the landless majority of society and vociferously challenge the State on matters related to land injustices. I intend to revisit land dispossession from African peasant communities from a critical historical perspective. Dispossession will be examined as a phenomenon that began with the advent of colonialism in South Africa, was perpetuated by the economic developments and was sealed by law. The investigation will affirm or disprove the contention that land rights are organized within a particular framework so as to achieve social, political and economic objectives favourable to the dominant groups. The paper will investigate the role of the Lutheran Church in establishing the processes of development in the Hermannsburg mission station at Muden in Natal in this regard.

The rural inhabitants have, in the past, also fiercely resisted forced relocations from their places of origin. Almost all literature on forced removals alludes to this fact. The particular relevance of the land for the rural communities is encapsulated in the historical reality of mission stations having been initially established largely in the country-side. The country folk were readily receptive to the process of evangelization; and more, they were the peasant farmers on land in those peripheral areas. Reconstruction and development in the rural areas will therefore have to witness active participation by the church in the addressing of the land crisis.

It is also vital to explore land and community development because the people on the ground are directly affected by the decisions taken on land allocation and land use. Again, in many instances there is minimal or no consultation with those who owned the land prior to dispossession or forced resettlement. Their fate is unilaterally decided by institutions whose legitimacy and credibility are suspect to the victims, for example, the State. I thus want to argue that there needs to be broad, all-inclusive consultation between those whose land was confiscated; those who buy and sell the land in question; those churches who own the land, the business community, various political players and the State when land restitution and even redistribution is being addressed. This, in my view, will cultivate the seeds of democracy which the country in general desperately hungers for. In Section D I intend to explore alternative mechanisms of how this process can be effected.

In corroboration to the centrality of land use in the rural areas Cross (1988) has this to say:

"The pivotal issue is the future land economy. Land is almost the only physical asset of the black rural economy; it presently attributes much less than it could to subsistence, and very little to development" (1988: 1).²

Put differently, black rural economy (and social development in addition) depends largely upon land, particularly its productive utility. This becomes even more evident when one considers the fact of agriculture for subsistence farming. Land is pivotal to the vitality of both these rural enterprises. If land is therefore wrested from peasant farmers in the rural terrain, more so for political ends and without compensation, the black rural economy is immediately paralysed. Economic immobility in the countryside will render objectives of social and agricultural development futile and further frustrate attempts to farm for subsistence.

The economic consideration of rural land use brings to review the whole question of land as a security asset through which loans from banking institutions could be secured. It is thus equally a commodity as it is a factor of production, given the intensity of market dynamics in South Africa today and the world over. Not only that, land is also a common denominator to all South Africans for residential purposes.

2. CROSS, C.R. (1988). 'Land reform and black rural economy in South Africa', in *Towards Freehold?*.

Current property relations in South Africa diminish the possibility of making proper land development. "As an item of consumption" (Nürnberg 1992: 6f),³ land could be utilized as geographical space for residential plots.

Nürnberg goes on to cite numerous other dimensions for which rural land could be used and managed. Among these are rail and road development, rubbish dumps and recreational fields for use by the rural communities. These are, in my opinion, basic community needs which collectively ensure, *inter alia*, that social fibre remains intact. All these foresaid considerations highlight the natural resourcefulness of land in the rural setting. They also explain why acute landlessness in the rural habitat has become politically sensitized and therefore as warranting urgent attention.

1.2 Methodological considerations of the research process

For as crucial and sensitive a subject as the church land ownership and use, it is imperative to operate above board with a specific methodology of research. This is significant because there are a variety of research methodologies, all of which have been used in researching the oppressed and dispossessed communities. The positivist paradigm which is the most dominant among these, has been extensively and exhaustively utilized often to the benefit and advantage of the researcher.

3. Nürnberg, K. (1992). 'Theses on the "theology of land" in its overall context', in *Church and Land*, No. 4.

However, the limitations and deficiencies of the positivist paradigm have been exposed by alternative methodologies and paradigms that have since emerged.

It has been argued, *inter alia*, that the positivist paradigm assumes knowledge as consensus. That is, knowledge as implying unwritten agreements between the researcher and the researched phenomenon. In practice this procedure arrogates dominance to the researcher who has all the resources of acquired knowledge at his/her disposal. Again, it relies heavily upon empirical analytical enquiry, leaving little or no room for local initiative. Further, the dominant, positivist paradigm has not always effected substantive socio-political changes in relation to the researched community. It is in this regard that the language used in the positivist paradigm has been found not readily comprehensible to the ordinary people in the communities of the poor and the oppressed.

It is also against this background that the unilateral knowledge construction by the positivist researchers has often resulted in the abuse of control and governance over peoples in their struggles and over the manipulation of their environment. These aforementioned constraints and shortcomings of the positivist paradigm, including the imposition of the notion of a value-free research by the researcher, have invariably nurtured the emergence of alternative research methodologies and paradigms. People-centred methodologies (Korten, 1990); participatory research (Maguire, 1987) as well as the Constructivist Inquiry and Fourth Generation

Evaluation (Guba/Lincoln) are among the latter development and research alternatives.

1.2.1 Case study research - a contextual paradigm

The history of how land ownership, occupation and use by Africans was systematically eroded to give way to white colonists and church missionaries, calls for careful probing. It brings forth an historical crisis of the land with a potential for resolution emanating from the same context of the crisis. In other words, the crisis is contextually in South Africa and therefore South Africans of all groups should devise a mechanism and increase the capacity to solve and deal with this historical crisis. The investigation of African land dispossession is essential, particularly if the researcher (as I do) premises it upon a presupposition that land restitution is an indispensable catalyst for cross-racial reconciliation in the new South Africa. The empirical collection of data from the grassroots people will inform the process of this research. The interviews in data collection become even more imperative, given the stake held by the church in land ownership and land use.

It is against this backdrop that I have intentionally opted for case study methodology with its inherent moments of collectivity, collaboration and intended emancipation. According to Merriam (1988), it has its own way of assembling, organizing and integrating, and results in a particular set of research findings.

Merriam makes distinction in elucidating the case study methodology, between experimental and non-experimental designs of research. For her, experimental research "... assumes that the researcher can manipulate the variables of interest - that is, there is a great deal of control over the research situation" (1988: 6). She goes further to explicate non-experimental research as a design entity which is

"... undertaken when description and explanation rather than prediction based on cause and effect are sought, when it is not possible or feasible to manipulate the potential causes of behaviour and when variables are not easily identified or are too embedded in the phenomenon to be extracted for study. The aim of descriptive research is to examine events or phenomena" (1988: 6).

Put in another way, there is no manipulation of treatments and judgements, the researcher deals with things as they are. Case studies like historical research methodologies are constituent components of the descriptive, non-experimental research.

Furthermore, Merriam observes that there are three aspects of the case study methodological framework that constitute the fundamental basis of the research process. She maintains that:

- "1. The nature of the research question is essential in that it seeks to answer the 'how' and 'why' questions;

2. The amount of control sets out to avoid manipulation of the researched phenomenon by maximising local participation in the research process; and
3. The desired end product of the research should be holistic, with intensive description and interpretation of the contemporary phenomenon" (1988: 9).

Again, Merriam argues that "case study does not claim any particular methods of data collection or data analysis" (1988: 10). Put differently, there are no specific methods of gathering information that are prerequisites for conducting the research. The researcher could use testing and interviewing and should not feel constrained to using statistics and other scientific, quantitative measures in carrying out the research. For an example, the researcher does NOT necessarily have to test a given hypothesis. To the contrary, case study seeks to interpret material in context. That means that this approach "aims to uncover the interaction of significant characteristics on the phenomenon. The case study seeks holistic description and explanation" (1988: 10). It is therefore a design suited to situations where it is virtually impossible to separate the variables of the phenomenon under investigation from context.

Becker, in his article 'Social observation and social case studies', aptly puts into perspective the objectives of a case study methodology. He says that case studies are utilized "to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the group under study and to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process" (1968: 233).

In the scenario portrayed above, both in Merriam and in Becker, it is succinctly clear that the case study research paradigm is both concrete and contextual. The process of research unfolds more elaborately when one considers the concrete experiences of the researcher as well as those of the phenomenon under inquiry. It is contextual because the experiences of the researcher and the researched entity are firmly rooted and grounded in a given context. I would argue further that it favours and harnesses empirical, participatory observation because both the researcher and the participants are observers simultaneously. Conclusions and findings are likely to generate transformation and anticipation in this context of case study, particularly if the presuppositions are premised on liberatory change that seeks to improve the quality of life of the group(s) being investigated, as does the intention of this research.

As opposed to the positivist and conventional approach which bases research on the assumption that "there is a single, objective reality - the world out there - that we can observe, know and measure" (1988: 17), the case study qualitative research

presupposes that there is a multiplicity of realities that can be subjected to observation. It further assumes that "beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception" (1988: 17). Therefore, in the case study paradigm the hypotheses are not the *sine qua non*, nor are there formal restrictive measures as to what the final product should be. The researcher at all costs abstains from manipulating the variables of interest from the subject of inquiry.

Regarding data collection in the case study methodology, the place and role of the researcher is of considerable significance. Merriam writes: "The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument rather than through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire or machine" (1988: 19). She advocates for the primacy of the researcher in data collection because, for her, the latter is responsive to the whole context, with capacity to expand and accommodate non-verbal dimensions of the informants.

The final aspects of Merriam's understanding of the case study research methodology alludes to the significance of fieldwork. She asserts: "One must physically go to the people, setting, site, institution ('the field') in order to observe the behaviour in its natural setting" (1988: 19). The researcher should become intimately familiar with the phenomenon being examined and establish a working rapport with local participants. This dimension, in my view, maximizes the capacity

of participation from the local people, and also reduces or eliminates the level of ambiguity and mistrust from both parties, that is, the researcher and the researched.

In a nutshell therefore, the case study paradigm of research encompasses elements of collaboration and collectivity between the researcher and his/her subjects of inquiry. This arrangement, like in participatory and action research methodologies, democratizes the process of research. Also, if designed and intended for such, it could be optimally applied to effect transformation and emancipation in the marginalised communities of the poor and the oppressed.

It is thus a necessity to operate above-board with the case study method in a context of land use, land reform and land restoration, as this study sets out to do. Furthermore, it will accommodate the interviews to be carried out at the Ophathe mission, a Lutheran farm community outside Muden. I will use the case study research method to have interviews with the local community and its grassroots leadership with the view of empowering them in their context of struggle for land and community development. I also intend to interview one or two development workers in the community to ascertain their views on land and education development. No questionnaires will be used since the method of data collection will be interviews. Also, there are several scholars who agitate for the case study paradigm but Merriam has been my prime material source.

1.3 Outline of sections and subsections

The work herein undertaken seeks to put into perspective as succinctly and frankly as possible the role that the church can and perhaps should play in the socio-political transformation of the rural society. It also sets out to give a critical theological reflection on rural community development as particularly related and interconnected to land utility by the church in Natal. The ELCSA-PMC-Farm Committees will be our case study as a point of reference, given the historical visible presence and missionary benefits the church has amassed over the years in that area. Arising from the investigation, suggestions and recommendations will be forwarded towards a deadlock-breaking mechanism around the land controversy. Again, the process of empowering the rural communities, their context, and environment will be the underlying intention of this project. Put in another way, the end product is intended to facilitate the liberation and empowerment process of emancipating the grassroots victims of land dispossession and forced removals.

The constituent dimensions of Section A are, has been stated earlier, the elaborate statement of the problem around which the entire investigation revolves. Also, briefly given consideration is the methodology that will shape the research in a profound contextual manner. This methodology, aptly described as case study research, and recognized as such, takes into serious cognizance the socio-political context; the economic experience and historico-cultural struggles of the poor and

oppressed peoples. It is also collaborative, and thus seeks to empower the marginalized in society, bringing into the fore the power dynamic the marginalized have of changing their immediate world of existence.

Section B consists of an historical overview of rural socio-political underdevelopment, particularly the controversy of land dispossession during the colonial era in South Africa. This subsection deals with a factual setting of how the indigenous people, the Khoikhoi and the San, were dispossessed of their land by the British and the Boer respectively. It also elaborately brings under critical scrutiny the legacy of Land Apartheid, that is, how through economic subjugation as well as through legislation, Africans were further systematically rendered landless. Certainly, this episode will inevitably include the origins and implications of the 1913 Land Act and the Natives Trust Land Act of 1936. Of particular significance will be the impact these Land Acts intertwined with the Pass Laws and the Group Areas Act had on restricting access to and ownership of land in South Africa by black people. The role of the Lutheran Church in the use of church-owned land within the Ophathe Mission (Muden) confines will be examined against this historical background of land dispossession.

The primacy of reconstruction and development of the rural communities, within the context of struggle towards socio-economic and political transformation in the country will be highlighted.. Here, in Section C, the position of the church within the

framework of land reform programmes will be exhaustively considered, particularly its relevance for the rural, landless peoples of South Africa. The pertinent sections of the Rustenburg Declaration will be briefly dealt with. Within the Declaration we will mostly concentrate on those areas which charter the envisaged programme of action that seeks to redress the historical land imbalances the country has witnessed since the advent of colonisation in the Southern African sub-continent. Invariably interlinked with this subsection of reconstruction and development will be the attitudes of the church towards current trends on rural development. The next section D will comprise of a suggested programme of action towards holistic land restitution from a sociological, as well as a theological, point of view.

Finally, the summary of the main findings of the investigation and a brief critical assessment of the research process, including the limitations thereof will jointly constitute Section E. Any appendices, if the need for such documentation to be hereto attached arises, will form the concluding component of this section.

SECTION B

2. A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SOCIO-POLITICAL LAND DISPOSSESSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Conradie submits:

"The history of land disputes is a history in which land was systematically usurped from the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. ... the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 consolidated the history of the previous two and a half centuries by allocating 87% of the land to whites while legally limiting 80% of the South African population to 13% of the land" (1992: 3).⁴

He goes on to say:

"The ANC was founded in 1912, precisely in opposition to this distribution of land. The history of apartheid, the schemes of self-governing bantustans, the Group Areas Act, the Pass Laws, influx control, forced removals, the repression of political opposition - all these well-known tragic features of twentieth century South African history can be interpreted as an attempt by a white minority to hold on to political and economic power, thereby keeping the existing distribution of land and wealth intact" (1992: 3).

4. Conradie, E.M. 'The significance of the land use in South Africa for Christian theology' in *Church and Land*, No. 4.

Within the same context of the genesis of land dispossession, Palmberg writes:

"The African National Congress was founded in 1912 and is the oldest liberation movement in Africa. Its first achievement was to unite Africans from different provinces and ethnic groups for united actions against the land policies that robbed the Africans of the best land, and that laid the foundation for the present bantustan policies. The Apartheid regime, which came to power in 1948, claims that all Africans can have citizenship rights in their respective bantustans only, scattered pieces of often barren land, covering only 13% of the total of South Africa" (1982: 238).⁵

Firstly, the radical language used by both Conradie and Palmberg reflects the emotive character of the land issue as viewed by historians from within and outside South Africa. Secondly, their observations provide a bird's eye view into the historical origins of the popular resistance movement of the African peoples; more pertinently its relentless struggle against land dispossession. Thirdly, their sentiments put into proper perspective the pre-1990 diplomatic and military confrontation that the liberation movement mounted against the South African government, namely that these political overtures began essentially as struggles for retention of land rights as affecting Africans. In a nutshell, the ANC began its programme of political resistance even prior to the promulgation of the Land Act of

5. Palmberg, M. (1982). *The Struggle for Africa*.

1913 as a means of registering discontent on land injustices, even though this programme later evolved to encompass a holistic socio-economic African existence in South Africa. This perspective is of considerable note since the current South African racial conflict emerges largely out of the pre-1948 political context.

It is argued by many historians that land dispossession in South Africa first emerged with the colonization and the subjugation of the indigenous of the country. However, it is crucial to distinguish between military methods used in usurping land from Africans during the Anglo-Boer conquest era and the statutory means of legislated land confiscation that saw light within the second and subsequent decades of the twentieth century. The former involves the conquest of the Khoikhoi and the San people and the subsequent dispossession of their land by force. The victims' pastures and livestock were forcibly taken without compensation. Palmberg observes thus: "Worse still for the Khoikhoi, the settlers forced them to hand over their cattle, the very basis of their social system. The Khoikhoi were then forced to work for the colonialists" (1982: 239). Land conquest therefore not only violently disrupted the social system of the Khoi people but it also intrinsically subsumed earlier labour practices that cemented the political subordination of indigenous populace to colonial authorities.

The San, on the other hand, were also not able to escape unscathed from the imperialist policies of the colonialists. The intrusion of the latter drastically reduced

the number of wild game upon which the San people depended for survival. Palmberg goes further to maintain that the colonialists "virtually organized hunting parties to exterminate the San" (1982: 239). Again, it is no gainsay to conclude that the earlier methods of forcible land dispossession by the colonialists not only impoverished and enslaved the Khoikhoi, they also gravitated towards eliminating a whole people, the San, from existence. This type of alienation from original land ownership, in my view, were not isolated attempts of subjugating the Khoi-San peoples but they were infused with intentions of racial genocide.

Later on, the fact that vast tracts of "land were owned collectively but cultivated individually" (1982: 240) by the Nguni groups did not deter the Boers from mounting military attacks upon locals, again to alienate them from their land. The complete conquest of land and people however, was consummated when the British forces took over the process of colonisation. They succeeded largely with the use of superior military arsenals and viable intelligence strategies. Historians argue that fierce resistance from black people fighting to retain their land was to span almost nine years throughout the Wars of Dispossession (1781-1790). Notwithstanding the historical accuracy of the aforementioned events, it was not until the second decade of the twentieth century that land dispossession took a more subtle and concealed turn. Law would then underpin the system of unilateral land misallocation which retrospectively would exclude black participation on matters of land ownership and land utility.

In another context, Bernstein *et al.* (1992) have this observation to make on the fundamental interconnectedness of labour and land use:

"Given that most people in pre-colonial societies gained their living from the land, the alienation of land to settlers and colonial companies by formal decree or other means (including outright land-grabbing); the restriction of indigenous people to agriculturally marginal (and sooner or later overcrowded) areas, and the competition for land as a commodity generated by commercialization, all contributed in major ways to 'releasing' and restructuring of the use of labour in colonial economies" (Bernstein *et al.*, 1992: 197).⁶

The process of land dispossession through colonisation the world over did not exempt South Africa from this phenomenon of inextricably intertwining the colonial economic processes with gross misappropriation of land ownership and use by the colonialists. It is fair therefore to conclude that colonialization as a tool to dispossess the Africans of their land served to undergird the political dynamics that favoured the oppressive and dominant groups; first the Boer and second the British. It further served to alienate the Africans from an entity and institution they collectively regarded as sacrosanct, their land. Finally, the colonial manoeuvres of land confiscation served to intentionally starve the Africans to submission to alien authority, culture and religion, thereby foregoing that which essentially governed

6. Allen, T. & Thomas, A. (eds) (1992). *Poverty and Development in the 1990s*.

both their existence and their worldview. The colonisation programme paved the way for land dispossession through legislation, as said earlier, after South Africa was declared a Union in 1910.

2.1.1 The legacy of land apartheid

Giving an historical agro-economic setting preceding the emergence of the Natives' Land Act of 1913, Colin Bundy⁷ maintains that Africans could be appropriated to three categories with respect to land tenure. Many were cash-paying tenants who lived and farmed in white-owned land. Others were sharecroppers, especially in the Orange Free State, paying rent to their landlords in the form of a share of the crop they cultivated. Lastly, there were also labour tenants who lived on farms and utilized land for their own sustenance. In return they paid for that land "by working for the landlord for a stipulated number of days each year" (Bundy 1990: 6). Particularly sharecropping and labour tenancy consistently sustained the viability of African peasant farmers that, within the ambit of the law, still had limited access to white-owned land. Both means of land tenure ensured that black peasant farmers had a surplus-producing agricultural enterprise, providing their families with a decent livelihood.

7. Bundy, C. (1990). "Land, law and power: Forced removals in historical context" in *No Place to Rest*.

Explicating labour tenancy further, TRAC⁸ puts it thus: "Members of the tenant family work for the farmer half the time, in exchange for being given access to land for ploughing and grazing their stock" (1988: 7). Put differently, labour tenancy provided contracts that not only catered for the tilling of the land but also accommodated pastoral land for livestock. This assertion becomes significant primarily when one considers the fact that many black peasant farmers had cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and horses, among others. In brief then, Bundy's argument reveals to us an agro-economic context and a set of farming conditions from which the Land Act of 1913 came forth, and the social context upon which it adversely impacted.

Introducing another crucial aspect of the land question, Bundy maintains that the relationship between ownership of land and power as a socio-political phenomenon cannot be overlooked in South Africa's property relations history. According to him, both the natives and State representatives

"... understood that certain forms of land ownership - private property rights in land - confer and concentrate economic and social power in the hands of one group or class of people, giving them ability to subordinate and exploit another group or class" (1990: 3).

8. TRAC is an acronym for the Transvaal Rural Action Committee, a non-governmental organization dealing with forcefully displaced families who are victims of the forced removals policy in the Transvaal.

He goes further to argue that the process of dispossession went beyond the borders of the land issue *per se*. It also "... deprived the small-scale cultivators of the ability to provide for themselves" (1990: 4). In other words, dispossession threatened the very core of existence of the black peasant farmers. This reality was evident in the systematic transformation of these largely self-sufficient cultivators into wage-labourers, a stark feature of the legacy of Land Apartheid.

In this incisive article Bundy goes on to perceptively throw light on a typology of three major mechanisms that sustained land dispossession of rural peasant communities:

"The first was forcible dispossession by colonial conquest ... Secondly, new economic forces and pressures severed people from their land ... The third mechanism was the role of the law, or intervention by the State" (1990: 4-5).

The first mechanism is alluded to in Palmberg's reference to the Khoi-San conflict with the Dutch settlers and British colonisers respectively. The second dimension concentrates on peasant producers and land owners being subjected to new economic complexities, including the paying of rent and tax. Survival within the framework of the new cash economy forced black peasant farmers to pay off their creditors with their immovable property and asset, their land. The third and final inference covers the dynamics of the partisan and sectional legislation of the Land

Act of 1913, the Group Areas Act and the Pass Laws, among others. Bundy concludes that these laws categorized people into new rationalized frames of owner, tenant, squatter, and so on. In a nutshell, Bundy provides a broad spectrum of formulae which substantively explain the land dispossession process logically and critically.

As inferred to earlier in this study, the historical process of land dispossession in South Africa would be incomplete without reference to the Land Act of 1913 and other related legislation. This law invariably had far-reaching implications as it laid the seminal basis for the eventual balkanisation of South Africa in the later years. Briefly then, the Natives' Land Act of 1913 (hereafter referred to as the Land Act) effectively restricted:

"... African land ownership to a very small part of South Africa's land surface, and within these areas erecting a political and administrative structure within which black political aspirations were to be contained" (Plaatje, 1982: 2).⁹

In essence, the Land Act proposed to confine land ownership by black people to less than 10% of the land surface throughout the Union of South Africa. Plaatje maintains that it was promulgated to meet the persistent demand by white farmers to have access to cheap labour, available in abundance in black residential areas

9. Plaatje, S.T. (1982). *Native Life in South Africa*.

referred to as reserves. The white farmers' demand would be rewarded when blacks with no freehold rights were forced by starvation through unemployment and landlessness to sell their labour to white landowners. Given the acute shortage and sometimes absence of commercial and industrial infrastructure, thousands of black families were compelled to labour for those who, by law, had rights to landholding and tenure. Plaatje contends further that the Land Act in particular "responded to the demands of white farmers in the Transvaal and Orange Free State to have sharecroppers living in their land transformed into farm labourers or servants" (1982: 3).

The Land Act also conclusively eliminated the possibility of hordes of rural Africans to consistently maintain their families. Gail M. Gerhart in her significant work, *Black Power in South Africa* contends that the Land Act further:

"... stripped many Africans outside the reserves of their right to own livestock, and abolished the various systems of sharecropping which had enabled large numbers of African squatters on white-owned farms to live a relatively independent and prosperous life" (1978: 22).¹⁰

Gerhart's assertion goes beyond most historians' confines in that it incorporates the magnitude of damage exerted by the Land Act regarding livestock farming impediments imposed upon the African community. It goes without saying then that

10. Gerhart, C.M. (1978): *Black Power in South Africa*.

even if the dispossessed black people had livestock to keep after the confiscation of their land rights, there would be no land accessible to them to pasture their stock. Restrictions on land ownership and use meant severe restrictions on grazing lands as well.

The most notable development in the process of this residential, agricultural and pastoral land dispossession was the feeding of towns and cities with thousands of Africans as potential cheap labourers and migrant workers in the mining and industrial sectors. This pattern of white policy of pushing Africans off their rural domain not only overcrowded the reserves but it also exacerbated the demographic crisis in the urban setting. Whereas in the rural areas African communities survived with land as their main resource of subsistence, in the cities not only was this experience rendered impractical but it also rendered their cultural and economic values impotent. Therefore, this significant shift of domicilium by the African peoples went beyond strictly land-related difficulties and crises; it also impacted adversely upon normal social and economic processes of the Africans as to alienate them completely from their environment.

Another phenomenon closely interrelated to the Land Act was the threat Africans inadvertently demonstrated towards destabilising "the rural Afrikaners who were also being rapidly drawn into the urban labour market" (Gerhart, 1978: 23). This development necessitated another legislative proscription of African influx into towns

and cities. Put in another way, the steady flow of Africans into urban areas had to be controlled such as to restrict movement between cities and the rural communities but mainly to inhibit competition between rural black and white with respect to labour market in the cities. This process was put in check through the Pass Laws system. I would argue then in this context that legal restriction with regard to African land ownership and the control of influx into metropolitan areas by Africans were expressly meant not only to dispossess Africans of their land but to sever their citizenship rights. In addition, I would say that land dispossession was holistically designed to commit African peasant communities into total socio-economic exploitation and political subjugation. The latter would be economically dependent upon dominant classes and groups with little alternatives open to them. But more, they would become politically impotent to determine their own destiny and this will be the *status quo* until a new political order has been installed.

The consequences of the Land Act are enormous with the rural communities being directly victimised by Land Apartheid. Aninka Claasens puts it more succinctly where she writes:

"The bantustans are in turmoil with angry populations determined to secede and rejoin South Africa. There are millions of black 'squatters' in occupation of so-called 'white' land in both rural and urban areas. White agriculture is in crisis and the population in the bantustans is sinking deeper and deeper into the poverty and malnutrition which is

the inevitable consequence of the establishment of such patently unviable economic 'units'" (1991: 43).¹¹

I would submit that the issues raised by Claasens are indeed fundamentally interlinked to the ravages of the Land Act as affecting both black and white racial groupings in South Africa. Spatial scarcity inevitably leads to various manifestations of social, political and economic maladjustment. Among these would be included high infant mortality because of poor health care administration; alcoholism and other forms of drug addiction; unemployment and the resultant high rate of criminal activity; unfavourable conditions for effective education and a general deterioration in the quality of life of the oppressed sections of society. In South Africa this retrogressive development has even extended into the arena of political violence in the homelands encompassing the most remote parts of the country. All these realities are, in my view, the direct consequences of landlessness and oppression premised in unbalanced property ownership patterns.

We can then without fear of contradiction conclude in concurrence with Mellisa Baumann in her article 'Reclaiming the land - rural struggles in South Africa', that:

"At the core of rural impoverishment, repression and resistance is land
... the disproportion is between ownership and occupation. Today

11. Claasens, A. (1991). 'For whites only - land ownership in South Africa' in *A Harvest of Discontent*.

60 000 white farmers own twelve times as much land as 14 million rural poor. The average farmworker - probably the most disenfranchised of all South Africans - earns R150 a month" (1991: 2).¹²

It is also noteworthy that statutory restriction of rural dwellers from access to land has inevitably nurtured the migratory labour system. Menfolk in search of work burgeon figures of people who come from homelands to work in the mines on a contractual basis. After the contract has expired they are homebound, again with no prospects of employment. Back at their rural homes they find their families in disarray with their distraught wives and children facing starvation and other malnutrition-related diseases. Because of long spells away from their rural places of abode, migrant workers also often find breakdown in family law. Consequently, there is an abundance of unplanned teenage pregnancies and rampant juvenile delinquency created by the 'single -parenthood' setting in the rural areas. I would strongly contend that all the aforementioned social ills originate primarily from a sense of landlessness and therefore purposelessness that is a permanent characteristic of many deprived and oppressed Third World communities.

Furthermore, it is significant to understand in a more specifically political context why there is incongruence among the far right and the far left regarding political

12. Baumann, M. (1991). 'Reclaiming the land'.

consensus. I would argue that in the light of the historical processes of land dispossession, it is no surprise that the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Afrikanerweerstandbewing (AWB), though pulling towards different political directions, premise their respective opposition to the Nationalist government upon the question of land. The first claim 'rightful' ownership of land by Africans and the latter separate geographic entities for the Afrikaners.

Finally, the legacy of Land Apartheid as based upon the Land Act

"... will inhibit many potential farmers, especially black smallholders, from obtaining land through outright purchase with their own funds. Apart from land purchase, the right to access to the other farmer support services will also be required for smallholder or new black farmers and other categories of farmers who have been discriminated in the past" (Van Rooyen, 1992: 1).¹³

In conclusion, the adverse impact of the Land Act in collusion with the Natives' Trust Land Act of 1936, largely accounts for the general polarisation that South Africa has witnessed between its black and white inhabitants. The country has been plunged into political chaos and racial disharmony because people were socialised through separate development based upon apartheid which was underpinned by the

13. Van Rooyen, J.C. (1992). 'The land issue in South African agricultural development' in *Church and Land*.

land discrimination. Governance of African social, political, environmental, economic and cultural development was appropriated to land separatist policy, tainting heavily land tenure and use. I would maintain that without the land acts and a plethora of related regulations, race relations in South Africa would have been more congenial and harmonious than is currently the case. Therefore, the legacy of Land Apartheid will receive redress precisely when pragmatic programmes of land restitution are designed and aptly implemented. It is my submission that once the process of land restitution is instituted, a solid basis for cross-racial reconciliation would have been put in place. The suggested mechanisms for initiating and implementing this process will be highlighted in the fourth section of this study.

2.2 The Ophathe Mission Community's response to land dispossession:

The case study

It is important to understand the fact that, as has been said in outlining the methodological process, the research empirical thrust will focus on the Ophathe Mission Community. The aforementioned community is situated midway between Greytown and Weenen in Northern Natal, 97 kilometres northwest of Pietermaritzburg. Ophathe Mission lies four kilometres west of Muden and is contained in the middle again between the tribal trust lands governed by the Chiefs and white-owned farms. It is also one of the 15 farms under the direct governance

and management of property management Company (PMC), a business subsidiary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC), South Eastern Diocese (SED).

There are, therefore, three stakeholders forming a tripartite alliance on Ophathe. It is the Ophathe Mission grassroots community and its local leadership, namely the Ophathe Farm Committee, the ELC-PMC and the SED, representative of church authorities. The place is entirely rural with the local population tenaciously keeping their traditional social conventions and cultural nuances. This observation is borne out by the fact that even the attire of the majority of the womenfolk is still *isidwaba* (a traditional skirt made up of an oxhide). The community relies heavily on land tillage as well as livestock farming for subsistence and survival. However, the land capacity around Ophathe cannot hold all the demands made on it by the local population. It is against this background that the research on land and community development evolved.

2.2.1 A brief historical background of Ophathe

An elder in the community, Mr Sosibo, said that around the 1880s all land in the Mudén District belonged to Chief Silwane of the Mchunu clan. The Hermannsburg Missionaries from Germany arrived and sought to purchase land for settlement. They insisted that their prime intention was to educate (*ukufundisa*) and to evangelise (*ukushumayela*) the people. In response the Chief said that his land was

not for sale but went on to grant them the permission to occupy the land which physically incorporated Ophathe and Muden missions.

The negotiation process led to the acquisition of vast tracts of land by the Hermannsburg Mission. However, the Chief was not entirely convinced that the Germans meant no harm and he therefore ordered them to build their sanctuary next to the river so that when the summer rains came they would be swept away by the floods. Ironically, the church building still bears testimony to old German architecture, standing on its original site. This historical fact was corroborated by several elders of the community who were part of the discussion. That in a nutshell is the development of the land acquisition process by the missionaries in Ophathe and that is how the locals lost access to their ancestral lands. It is perhaps also significant to note that in all these land transactions the majority of the people were not consulted except for the *izinduna* (the Chief's advisors or councillors).

It is also important to recognise the fact that the surrounding areas belong to right-wing farmers who are very intolerant of any attempts of unionisation of their farmworkers. The rest of the land belongs to Chief Simakade of the Mchunu clan which land stretches to Msinga. The landscape is arid in Ophathe Mission and coupled with the plight of drought, the situation is desperate. Those who sell their labour to the white farmers earn between R100 and R120 per month and a bag of mielie meal.

The whole mission area has been forced into a tenancy situation with everybody in Ophathe being a tenant of PMC by nature of the current property relations. Subscription to the Christian faith became the panacea for land accessibility and those who resisted conformity were expelled from the mission. They only had access to land through declaring their allegiance to the chiefs and in the areas governed by the latter.

In this land transaction the indigenous populations not only lost access to land to plough but also grazing rights. Again, families had to cut their livestock from whatever number down to four. The result was that for the stock exceeding four the owner was penalised by the mission authorities and was forced to auction the excess. Also, stock found grazing 'out of bounds' was impounded by the Mudén authorities and released for R20 per item.

With regard to the fields the rental is currently R10 per homestead. This money is payable to PMC through the farm committee. This crisis is compounded by the fact that there is no access for the community to irrigation facilities which are in place within the vicinity. The problem of drought has exacerbated the situation forcing the locals to buy vegetables which they could cultivate themselves.

Finally, there are abounding farm evictions carried out by local white farmers. The reality of evictions has further perpetuated joblessness which in many areas of

South Africa has fuelled the scale of violence. The majority of the people are now landless and unemployed, which could produce unpalatable consequences in the long term. Violence is one possibility, gangsterism for young people is another. Also the general level of petty criminality could easily rise.

The locals feel that all forms of land dispossession should be nationally redressed to avoid a situation of uncontrollable conflict that could erupt in the country as it has recently in the Weenen district. They also feel that the church has a significant conciliatory role to play in the process of restitution. This role by the church does not in their view preclude the role of other major players like government and big business as well as political organizations. In fact, many of the local people realise the magnitude of the restitution process given the reality of conflicting land claims in various parts of the country.

SECTION C

3. TOWARDS RURAL RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

This section will primarily focus on the alternatives that will agitate towards comprehensive reconstruction and development of the rural communities. It is important though to clarify from the outset the use and meaning of the terms 'reconstruction' and 'development' in this study so as to avoid their being misconstrued for what the 'Reconstruction and Development Programme' (RDP) has been understood to be. The RDP as conceived by the ANC and Government of National Unity (GNU), is a single umbrella concept of a comprehensive political and economic programme that seeks to redress the ravages of apartheid. However, reconstruction in this project refers to the process of reshaping land accessibility and utility particularly with regard to those who are occupying church land. Reconstruction will therefore concern itself with land reform in general and church land in particular.

Development encompasses what programmes have been put into place by the church or, where relevant, the lack of vision from the church as an institution towards implementing land reform and not in the main concern itself with economic development as with people (community) and land development. Put differently, development in this study focuses largely on the tangible, material support from the churches, aimed at uplifting the quality of life of the rural people.

I will begin by putting forward land reform perspectives that have been advanced by secular institutions and individuals as a basis on which to build the church's solid position on land reform. Next, I will present different churches' resolutions on land development and subsequently incorporate the pertinent sections of the Rustenburg Declaration on the subject. I will then examine the evolution and praxis of the ELC-PMC development model and critically evaluate its relevance in the Ophathe Mission *vis-a-vis* the locals perception of such development. Further reference will be made to the Kwanzimela Conference which was convened by the trilateral liaison structure of ELC-PMC, SED and farm committees under the jurisdiction of ELC-PMC in Natal. I intend to decipher from that conference the assessment of the process leading to, during and after the conference, by the Ophathe Farm Committee in particular. Finally, I shall distil lessons for the church arising out of the conference. The whole process is intended to define and refine the church's position and vision on this sensitive subject of land and community development.

Given the socio-economic disadvantages that are peculiar to South Africa's African population in general and to peasant rural communities in particular, it is perhaps crucial to have conceptual clarity in relating reconstruction and development to our context. Even more imperative would be to interpret these concepts in the light of specific aspects connected to rural land and community development by the church. I shall therefore give tentative working definitions of both these concepts and appropriate them to a particularly rural context for application.

Reconstruction

In its document, *The Reconstruction and Development Programme - A Policy Framework* (1994),¹⁶ the ANC provides an historical framework from which proceeded the destruction of the African way of life and the impairment of the ethos of *ubuntu*. The ANC correctly points out the dimensions that facilitated the process of the erosion of social, economic, political, agricultural, ecological and cultural systems and conventions. They argue:

"Our history has been a bitter one dominated by colonialism, racism, apartheid, sexism and repressive labour policies. The result is that poverty and degradation exist side by side with modern cities and a developed mining, industrial and commercial infrastructure. Our income distribution is racially distorted and ranks as one of the most unequal in the world - lavish wealth and abject poverty characterise our society" (1994: 2).

The ANC goes on to say that the economy was premised on a systematically enforced racial demarcation in every aspect of existence of the country's citizens. They argue: "Rural areas have been divided into underdeveloped bantustans and well-developed white-owned commercial farming areas" (1994: 2).

16. ANC (1994). *The Reconstruction and Development Programme*.

In this regard the document highlights the qualitative difference that is conspicuous between townships for black people and suburbia for the white people, and the social and economic gap between them. It is however prudent to contend that even if the situation has not changed substantially, the racial complexion of the suburbs has since been altered by the removal of the Group Areas Act from the statute books. More and more members of the black bourgeoisie class are moving out of the townships into the previously white-owned and dominated suburbs. The exception in this transitional period remains largely in cities and towns still governed by the white right-wing. This phenomenon stands to change as well in the course of political development in South Africa.

Furthermore, the R.D.P. document points to sharp inequalities in areas, for example, of education; health care; social welfare; transport and employment opportunities. It maintains that these imbalances have grossly paralysed the economic potential of the country. Labour practices, entrenched through legislation, have also ensured that the economic gap between black and white South Africans remains unbridgeable. Thus retrogressive economic distinction has kept the country on the margins of the world economy because of various embargoes and sanctions exerted by different world bodies. Consequently socio-economic under-development escalated by under-investment and disinvestment has not been favourable to the quality of life of the marginalized.

Another conspicuous contribution of the apartheid system to the destruction of productive and vibrant social life of all South Africans but especially black people, was the unleashing of

"... a vicious wave of violence. Thousands and thousands of people have been brutally killed, maimed, and forced from their homes ... We are close to creating a culture of violence in which no person can feel any sense of security in their person and property." (1994: 3).

Given the historical perspective of what was destroyed and how it was systematically destroyed, it is appropriate to talk about reconstruction and more, to strive towards its implementation. It is reconstruction of the individual, the family, the community, the society, the whole nation of South Africa that befits a working definition of what constitutes reconstruction. It is a plethora of issues that has decisively brought to surface the urgency of rebuilding the nation and the country; and against that background, I will go on to briefly present an overview of what makes up 'development'.

Development

Development as has largely been espoused and implemented by western scholars, is preoccupied with economic growth at the expense of natural and human resources of the community. This growth-centred development has not visibly transformed the poor quality of life of the underdog of society in South Africa and elsewhere in the

world. People and ecological considerations have featured as secondary items of the development priority schedule. What needs to be systematically evolved is what David Korten (1990) called 'people-centred development'. He defines this notion of development thus:

"Development is a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to utilise and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in 'their quality of life' consistent with their own aspirations" (Korten 1990: 67).

This assertion by Korten lays the basis upon which development in the rural areas should be understood in the context of this study. It will therefore consequently be relevantly appropriated to aspects of development interconnected with church land use and development to transform the socio-political and economic welfare of the rural communities.

Historically the precepts and parameters of development have been defined primarily in terms of what Western social scientists perceived and understood as development. Hence this collective observation from Ross Haynes and Jotham Myaka:

"In the past development has been viewed as introducing Western Systems, Structures and philosophies to the client communities. 'Development' was equated with 'Westernisation'. Needs, and their priorities, were identified by outsiders in the belief that the community

would soon see the worth of them and that the communities would then take over and run such projects themselves"¹⁷ (1991: 6).

The two community development workers further argued that the actual needs, priorities and social realities have been given little cognizance regarding communities for which development was intended. They consequently conclude that "the introduction of projects approach has failed worldwide as a community development strategy" (1991: 7), and this has been the common fate of most rural areas. They, again like Korten (1990), espouse the 'people-centred' approach, where economic growth results from successful empowerment of the community members, rather than making them vehicles of agro-economic productivity. Their research finding, among others, is that "economic opportunities alone are usually appropriated by the strong few for their own benefit, frequently leaving the remaining community members worse off than they were before" (1991: 7).

Summary

When reconstruction and development are understood and applied as people-centred phenomena, then rural reconstruction and development become imperative, clearer and even indispensable. Both the church and the State have grossly ignored the rural communities with regard specifically to optimally empowering the rural social, economic, political, ecological and religio-cultural power-base. In this context and

17. Haynes, R. and Myaka, J. (1991): ELC-PMC Development Office Annual report.

against that background the reconstruction and development as related to church land use become relevant, even more so within the framework of the new political dispensation in the country. More significantly, it will in my view, nurture and facilitate the process of reconciliation and holistic nation-building; providing rural inhabitants with clarity of vision as regards their role in comprehensively reconstructing and developing their disadvantaged communities.

3.1 Secular perspectives on land reform

Van Rooyen suggests four objectives that should underpin land reform in rural areas.

He argues that basic considerations should be:

- "(a) to enable access to land for all but especially those who lost or were previously denied such opportunities.
- (b) to ensure that those who utilise such access are placed in a position to improve their quality of life and welfare position.
- (c) to ensure that agriculture is restructured to make an optimal contribution to economic growth, food security and sustainable rural development; and
- (d) to attend to the needs of those who will be negatively affected by land reform measures (1992: 8).

For Essy Letsoalo, land reforms that were initiated by the Nationalist Government are premised on two broad perspectives. He sums them up thus: "Land reforms alter the general direction of development, that is, they are a result of an unsatisfactory situation; and that land reforms create a better life for the users of land" (1991: 99).

Letsoalo argues that given the State initiatives as they were intended, there was no inherently valid economic reason, at least the beginning, for such State undertakings. As a result, traditional land tenure system was eroded on the basis that it was defeating the ends of development. This situation, according to Letsoalo, "impoverished Africans rather than increased agricultural productivity" (1991: 99).

The major thrust of Letsoalo's argument is that Africans were forcibly moved out of rural economy mainstream to become a cheap labour force in the cities. That process of building the capitalist economy at the expense of the bantustans failed and collapsed "despite half a century of development projects" (1991: 99). The process of forcible removals coupled with land reduction was systematically undertaken to alienate the black populace from land and to confine them to already overcrowded and overgrazed arid reserves. Letsoalo critically observes:

"The displacement of populations through forced removals has been one of the best planned violation of human rights by the State. Of particular significance in the context of land reforms is that bantustan populations are communities that are either semi-rural or semi-urban, communities

that migrate or commute to white urban centres from resettlement sites, communities comprising of forced removals" (1991: 101).

Land reforms in this context examined by Letsoalo vehemently militate against rural development. - in fact, they are a response by the State, that is, the Nationalist government, toward its counter-productive strategies of under developing all black rural communities. Land was therefore strategically reduced for African occupation, ownership and use, and Letsoalo maintains that led to 'betterment planning' by the Nationalist Government.

He goes on to assert that land reduction as a measure to control African occupation gave birth to:

"... overstocking, overgrazing and deterioration of land... As the reserves deteriorated, their subsistence began to be threatened; they could no longer maintain or reproduce a migrant labour force. Thus it became necessary to control, halt or reverse the severe underdevelopment" (1991: 102)".

Because the reserves or bantustans were exhausted in terms of their productivity, there was to be initiated betterment programmes that would prevent further deterioration of land. Betterment schemes presupposed that black people mismanaged the land at their disposal rather than that the underdevelopment strategies of the State diminished the

quality of the land. That is the reasoning behind the objective of rehabilitating rural lands "with the emphasis on introducing better crops, methods of production and livestock strains" (1991: 103). Rural development within the framework of land reform was thus based on the betterment planning premise, beside rural land reduction.

The betterment scheme initiative categorized rural blacks into two major groups namely, the landless who were to be allocated residential plots only, and full-scale farmers who would be entitled to a residential plot and/or grazing rights. This method of betterment planning was fiercely resisted, particularly in the 1950s. Letsoalo maintains: "Rural struggles against betterment schemes were reported as recently as the early 1980s" (1991: 104). Thus it is that land reform initiatives by the Nationalist government have created discontentment among the majority of South Africans, both those in the bantustans/rural areas as well as those in the cities.

Finally, Letsoalo argue that the objective of land reform is intrinsically and essentially to change property relations,

"... land ownership and occupation rights with the aim of changing the distribution of income, social status and political power. So-called land reforms in South Africa have not attempted to bring these changes. Thus, whereas effective land reforms require a shift in power from landlord to tenant, the reverse has occurred; *de facto* landowners have been transformed into tenants" (1991: 107).

In a document entitled 'Land reform-sector policy paper' (1975),¹⁸ the World Bank elaborately describes land reform thus:

"Land reform is thus concerned with the interrelated aspects of productivity and equity of land use. It is frequently pursued as a goal in itself, but in a development context is usually seen as a part of agrarian reform or of rural development programme. Land reform differs from political, administrative, fiscal or monetary reforms in that it normally relates to one sector and involves changes in control, land is fixed in supply but also provides the basic factor on which most of the people in developing countries depend for their livelihood" (World Bank 1975: 20).

Productivity and equity of land use as the fundamental dimensions of land reform relate directly to the plight of rural communities. Particularly in terms of the lack of farming skills and technology that peasant communities in the rural areas have been exposed to, the productive utility of arable land available has been a visible deficiency. Coupled with rapid population growth and disappearing land frontiers,

"... continued deterioration of farming conditions in sub-Saharan Africa has given urgency to the need to adopt more capital intensive agriculture in order to increase land productivity" (Migot-Adholla, 1992: 18).¹⁹

18. World Bank (1975): Land Reform - Sector Policy.

19. Migot-Adholla, S. (1992): *Rural Land Tenure Reform, and Implications for Rural Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

This assertion by Migot-Adholla sums in a nutshell the need for adopting modern methods that will alleviate the agricultural problems related to lack of expertise that rural peoples encounter in Sub-Saharan Africa. Migot-Adholla's observation has relevance to the rural South African context, not only in terms of agriculture as an isolated phenomenon of crop cultivation, but also towards modern methods and techniques in live stock farming.

As the World Bank correctly points out, land reform would ideally, in a rural context, encompass a rural development programme that primarily seeks to empower people in that context and propel schemes that would ensure feasible socio-economic self-reliance in all spheres of their existence. Put differently, land reform should attempt to foster a holistic transformation process which will, *inter alia* create jobs; enhance opportunities for self-help vegetable gardens run by the community and encourage small-scale farming for these peasant communities. In a nutshell, land and rural development programmes should provide the rural communities with a livelihood - an enterprise for subsistence and even for profit-generation.

It is however necessary to understand that the whole process of land reform can involve a variety of changes; and the World Bank lists four of the possible qualitative changes that can occur during or as a result of the land reform process:

- "1. Redistribution of public or private land in order to change the patterns of land distribution and size of holdings ...

2. Consolidation of individual holdings, thereby reorganising the physical pattern of control ...
3. Changes in ownership and tenurial rights, with or without physical redistribution of land. Redistributed land can be allocated to new owners or to farmers working on the land. Alternatively, land need not be distributed but tenants or workers can be made owners of the land they work ...
4. Changes in conditions of tenure without changing ownership or redistributing the land" (1975: 20-21).

3.2 The church's historical position on land reform

I will argue that the model of rural transformation used by the ELC-PMC in its farm land holdings could set a practical example for many other churches in a similar land holding position, as is suggested the World Bank in point 3. Also, the church could adopt the basic considerations and objectives of land reform as outlined by van Rooyen and implement them according to the needs of the communities resident on church-owned property. Pragmatically, the church could facilitate the process of enabling rural communities to have access to land but primarily communities who were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands. It is no gainsay, in my view, to acknowledge the conspicuous unavailability of land, arable or otherwise, to those

people who were consigned by the Apartheid policy to starve in arid overcrowded homelands, as well. These various groups of landless people - those resident on church property; victims of forcible relocation and those found in the homelands- should as van Rooyen suggests, be given priority attention with regard to land that the church could make accessible to them to use.

The second pragmatic step for the church to take in implementing its land reform programme is to ensure that those communities who utilise such access are enabled to improve their quality of life and welfare through farming skills training and through other forms of basic agricultural education. Workshops funded by the church and perhaps with subsidies for the State and organised business, could be embarked upon to facilitate that process of empowerment by education. Even soliciting voluntary assistance from service organisations like Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA); Farmers' Support Group (FSG), and ELC-PMC, among others, could benefit the communities in improving their socio-economic rural existence.

Furthermore, as explicated by van Rooyen, reorganisation of agriculture for optimal contribution to economic growth, food security and a viable, sustainable rural development programme, is a way of transforming and reconstructing rural socio-economic life. The role of the church in this regard may be to make representation to the State for funding schemes like agricultural or vegetable co-operatives and to encourage the African traditional forms of communal land utility, even ownership. The

church could establish church-based education and training in land development either for subsistence or for purposes of residence.

Again, the invaluable contribution the church can make towards the land reform process is to offer relevant counselling sessions to those who will be affected adversely by the land reform measures. These people could include in their ranks rural communities who even through the land reform process will still remain landless, and those current owners from whom the State could possibly expropriate land holding rights. It is to be acknowledged the fact that counselling does not and will not replace the reality of landlessness or even the reality of being rendered landless by socio-political dynamics. However, a support system of dealing with the aforesaid trauma is the best that the church could make available to victims of land reform.

The above recommendations could afford the church a credible position and legitimacy with respect to pragmatic engagement in the land reform process. Making congruent these objectives with the four possible changes outlined by the World Bank should not be ruled out. But the needs, as expected, would differ from one rural context to the other. This factor does not, however, preclude the positive role the church can play in challenging the State to implement the land reform measures as well as enacting these principles with its self-owned property.

We can therefore, conclude that even if the church has no tangible programme with regard to its land reform position, both in terms of dealing with church-owned property as well as in making submissions to the State on the issue of land reform, it has a substantive role to play especially adopting pertinent basic objectives on land reform advocated by secular organisations. Church-initiated programmes of land reform directed at redressing historical land disparities will add weight to its critiques towards the government's inertia relating to land reform. A practical, workable step the church could set a trend with in living out justice in the area of land reform, could be to make farm workers on church property co-owners of the land they work on. The church, I will argue, has in its constituency personnel who could work out the criteria for farm workers to have title or holding rights on its property. This exercise will demonstrate, in my view, trendsetting leadership for the Government of National Unity to follow. The church will be, by so doing, leading from the front.

Despite the several views expressed by secular agencies in the preceding subsection, I will argue that the church in South Africa has not definitively adopted and internalised the all-embracing objectives on land reform. Much of the material on the subject of land reform by theological scholars and ecumenical institutions has largely originated from the following papers, seminars and conferences: 'Theology of Land Reflections' (Nünberger, 1992), 'The Significance of the Land Issue' (Conradie, 1992), and church resolutions on land at synods, general assemblies and conferences. Also

the Rustenburg Declaration (1990) and the South African Council of Churches (1991) have resolutions that were adopted with emphasis put on the land question.

Suffice it to submit that these bodies and individuals who have been involved in extensive debate on the land issue in South Africa have not gone beyond the resolution-adoption stage. This reflects adversely on the church as a corporate body, in other words, the comprehensive programme from the church as a collective entity has not effectively materialized. However, it is important to concede that individual initiatives from various churches have been attempted and some have been viably sustained.

The tangible examples worthy of mention are the Methodist Church of Southern Africa at Indaleni in Richmond, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa at the Mpolweni Mission, the Roman Catholic Church in Marianhill, and the Church of the Province (Anglican church) in Springvale in the Mzimkhulu district. This critique of the church as a social organ becomes valid particularly when one discerns the relative ambivalence of the church on the issue of land reform. Most of the deliberations in theological conferences and seminars have aptly been critical of what wrongs the State has committed and what the development agencies have omitted. Despite all the productive debates alluded to above, the church has not yet formulated a comprehensive and an all-embracing vision around land reform and community development. But more significantly, it has not proceeded to implement those

resolutions that it has adopted, where these have been duly taken. I will take the examples of four churches to highlight initiatives that have been attempted by the church in South Africa in the area of land and will demonstrate lack of commitment in the foresaid arena of land reform and community development.

3.2.1 Different churches' resolutions on land reform

The Moravian Church

Wessels (1992) in his article 'The land issue in South Africa and church land' elaborates on how the Moravian Church historically acquired property and also the geographical locus of that property, namely the Eastern and Western Cape provinces. He goes on to give the socio-historical reasons for the whole mission plantation enterprise. In most cases the land that is currently owned by the Moravian Church was either sold to the church or donated by those who had access to that particular property before the arrival of the church.

With regard to development, the Moravian Church has transformed the bulk of their land into commercial or industrial sites. They have, among others, built shoe and glove factories, a bakery and a few agricultural projects. However, it would seem that these undertakings have not met the needs of the locals. This assertion is supported by the massive exodus of the locals into cities in search of better employment. This has, in

the meantime, depopulated these rural mission stations and has thus also frustrated all plans to make the mission stations self-sufficient.

This state of affairs should be expected if, as Wessels maintains of other land transactions, "... only Moravians are eligible to become inhabitants of the mission station" (1992: 3). People who have been denied access to land and alongside that, have been rendered jobless by the national economic down-slide, will certainly migrate to areas where there are job opportunities, for survival and subsistence. When that reality is coupled with exclusivist tendencies from a powerful institution like the church, the situation of landlessness and joblessness is exacerbated.

Part of the property of the Moravian Church has been leased to farmers. A section of the local population work on the surrounding farms. However, "at most Mission Stations the land is not used to its full extent. There is adequate water for irrigation but many garden plots are not planted" (1992: 4). I will argue that the availability of arable land does not immediately equip people with skills to plough productively or to farm profitably. People must be empowered with the necessary know-how in order to use the land at their disposal creatively and meaningfully. Development does consist in people being given access to land only; it involves development of human resources which most churches have grossly ignored.

The Moravian Church faces another challenge in the area of land and community development, namely the ownership of land. The question of property ownership is currently under review by the Moravian Church authorities. Wessels writes:

"There are advantages but also disadvantages. The history of granting of ownership rights to inhabitants of mission stations is that where this was done the character of the mission station was changed to that of a village and ultimately the religious basis of life together was lost" (1992: 4).

It would be counterproductive for one to pass value judgement on the viability of this arrangement in the context of current advocacy for land redistribution by both the State and extra-parliamentary bodies like the Congress of South African Unions (COSATU). Nonetheless, it is succinctly clear that in the area of land and community development very mediocre progress has been made by the Moravian Church.

The Roman Catholic Church

On the Catholic front, land is owned by various dioceses and religious orders. This is particularly true in the case of the Catholic Church in Natal. P. Brislin outlines the land surface capacity that is owned by the Catholics thus:

"In Natal ... there is a total of nearly 16 000 hectares. Of this land, 42% is leased to white farmers. 30% is being used by tenants (about 400

families of which many are migrant workers, only using the land for residence). 18% is being farmed by the church. 9% is being used by neighbouring communities" (Brislin, 1992: 1).

This land utility breakdown by Brislin gives an indicator towards strides the Catholic Church has taken to reform and develop the land at their disposal in the KwaZulu-Natal province. Brislin goes further to present briefly the process leading to church land acquisition in the region as well as the perceptions by Catholics, clergy and lay people, of land ownership by the church. He argues that the general feeling within the Catholic circles is that church land is a burden which Catholics should rid themselves of. He reflects thus:

"Priests and others in responsible positions in the church speak of the experience of Mozambique where church land was expropriated and the fact of land ownership became a stumbling block and a source of conflict and suspicion between the church and civil authorities" (1992: 2).

This sentiment is justifiable particularly in South Africa where the land ownership and land utility have been inextricably linked to the legacy of apartheid. However, whether or not the Catholic Church pleads complicity in this regard is not immediately self-evident. However, there are more substantive reasons for the option the Catholics have considered. Brislin observes critically:

"Priests trained in theology and called to minister to communities, find that a large part of their time is taken up in administering church

properties, a job in which they have little interest or competence. Worse, they are placed in a position that is counterproductive to their calling as ministers, they are bosses or landlords" (1992: 2).

There are also farms owned by the Catholic Church as has been alluded to above which have been leased to white farmers or which alternatively have been farmed by the church. Brislin concedes that some of the property has been used to generate income for various local congregations and dioceses.

Part of the property has been lying unused and part has been sold. Notwithstanding the profitability of some of the farms, one of the overwhelming views "is the subdivision of church land for sale to existing tenants" (1992: 2). There are however inherent problems within this arrangement given the lack of skills, inaccessibility of credit facilities and poor organization from most of the tenants.

Therefore, as Brislin suggests there needs to be "a more complete strategy of development that will indeed restore the land to those who will live on it and work it" (1992: 3). More significantly though, the Catholic Church needs to empower people who live on church land by making skills and agricultural training facilities available to the people. This could be done by consulting broadly especially with those mostly affected, namely, the tenants, farm workers and surrounding communities.

I would argue that a comprehensive programme of development by the Catholic Church and many others has to necessarily involve broad consultation, more so in the area of rural land and community development. This, in my view, will restore lost confidence in the Church from all those who have been adversely affected by the operations of land apartheid.

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

At its October 1991 conference the Methodist Church took some practical resolutions on the issue of land, among which was: "glebes should be developed as far as possible for the benefit of the whole community" (1992: 1). Even though this was a general proposal, it had potential to be carried out to its logical conclusion in practice. It was a small beginning towards a viable position.

However, on a more significant note, the Methodist Church resolved to confront the government of the Nationalist Party on the question of returning expropriated land. This they would do by exhorting their constituency to:

- "1. Identify with people in their struggle to retain communal ownership of land where they so desire.
2. Strive to buy and make land available to those who have lost their land" (1992: 2).

This move by the Methodist Church was the first step towards tackling the question of land particularly with the view of being part of the land redistribution process. Despite this noble resolution there has been no further attempt to implement it. Like most churches the Methodist Church is trapped in the resolution phase of the land debate. As a result the vision of land reform within this institution remains an ideal towards which the Methodist Church and other churches are striving.

It is in this context that the concern of land and community development becomes pertinent where church bodies have adopted practical proposals and take long to implement them or worse still, no attempts are made to put them into use. To buy land and avail it to the victims of land apartheid is a positive step in the direction of land reform and development from the side of the church. It is in itself a challenge to the State to take its cue from organizations that have for most of the time advocated for equity and justice. Put in another way, the church will be putting into place a praxis from which other land-owning agencies can develop a stable mechanism for land redistribution and land restitution.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa

The Reformed Presbyterian Church has property at Mpolweni Mission about 25 kilometres north of Pietermaritzburg. Most of the locals work in Pietermaritzburg because of lack of social and economic infrastructure in the area. There has been no

move towards developing the land or the community in the last ten years. Thus the local inhabitants have become indifferent both towards the State and church since their land needs have not been attended to by both institutions. The high rate of unemployment in the area has fuelled the flames of violence and petty crime, sinking the Mpolweni community into a further state of desperation and hopelessness.

3.2.2 The Rustenburg Declaration of 1990 on land²⁰

The National Conference of Church Leaders held in Rustenburg in November, 1990 highlighted a number of issues concerning the church and the past, present and future of South Africa. The denominations across the church spectrum emerged with a common vision of various topical issues, irrespective of their theological and doctrinal differences. Among other complex and sensitive subjects dealt with at the conference was a comprehensive resolution adopted on the land question.

The conference resolved, *inter alia* that:

"After decades of oppression, the removal of discriminating laws will have to be accompanied by affirmative acts of restitution in the fields of health care, psychological healing, education, housing, employment, economic infrastructure, and especially land ownership. For many years, greed has led to the taking of land from the poor and the weak. Both church and

20. Alberts, L. and Chikane, F. (eds) (1991): *The Road to Rustenburg - The church looking forward to a New South Africa*. (Appendix A).

State must address the issue of rezoning land to dispossessed people"

(1991: 281).

It is important to note and applaud the vision of the church in its prophetic capacity to realise the need for addressing land ownership both by the church and by the State because both organs have a massive stake in property ownership. Equally crucial was the confession by the church about the 'greed element' and probably its complicity in it in the historical process of land dispossession from the black people. However, over and above that, the courage of the church to own up to land confiscation for the first time went beyond the resolution adopted. The church called for affirmative acts of land restitution towards the dispossessed majority of the South African community; and even suggested the way forward in the implementation of that process.

The declaration continues:

"As a first step towards restitution, the church must examine its land ownership and work for the return of all land expropriated from relocated communities to its original owners" (1991: 284).

The Rustenburg Declaration calls not only for an introspective examination of property relations by the church beginning with its self-owned land; it also agitates for the national restoration of all land expropriated by the State. This radical stand adopted by the church in Rustenburg, takes into serious account the stark consequences of the

forced removal policy. It encompasses the restoration of land to millions of black people who were violently uprooted in their original communities and, without remorse, dumped into overgrazed and overpopulated homelands. The victims of this disruptive relocation policy had no recourse to any legal restitutive mechanism. Families were destroyed; lives were lost during the resistance campaigns; crop harvest and livestock were irretrievably left behind. The church at Rustenburg concretized measures to redress this historical reality even though no particular programmes on rural reconstruction and development related to land acquisition and utility were designed. This was, in my view, a bold and proactive step, readily laying foundations for secular bodies to build on.

In a more focused, goal-specific way, the Rustenburg Declaration resolved to ask various "churches to make available financial and human resources to enable the working reconstruction and renewal of South African society" (1991: 285). Finance collected from churches responding to this call and even human resources could be directed primarily towards the rebuilding and renewing of the rural communities; communities who are worse off in terms of social and economic viability than the urban areas.

3.3 The ELC-PMC development model: The Ophathe case study

As mentioned elsewhere in this work the focus of this study will be the development *modus vivendi* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa in the Ophathe Mission station. This subsection thus examines the initiatives and efforts of the ELC-PMC to develop the land and the community of Ophathe in Muden (Northern Natal). The choice of the ELC-PMC model of development stems from their intensive efforts to consciously embark upon a transformative community development programme in the past three years. It is also based on their attempts to go beyond resolutions towards implementation of those resolutions. ELC-PMC has tried to evolve a theological praxis which relates directly to land and community development in most of the 15 church farms under their jurisdiction and care. It is this background which has motivated this case study which will serve as a model from which other churches and institutions can learn.

The fact that the Ophathe Mission is sandwiched between white-owned farms on one hand and tribal lands governed by the chiefs on the other, is a mammoth challenge to ELC-PMC. This is because the former is premised on exploitation whilst the latter is authoritarian in terms of governance. The church is looked upon as an alternative mechanism through which local grassroots people can express their needs of development. It is also a threat to the power-base of these two power blocks given its capacity to conscientize the oppressed and marginalised communities.

It is in this context and against that background that ELC-PMC has come up with a unique model of development. Maybe it is necessary to highlight a few areas of need where ELC-PMC has initiated land and community development programmes. Among these would be included more land for agriculture; water for irrigation and domestic utility, education and health, community-based women-empowerment programmes and the forthcoming local elections (October/November 1995).

Historically, ELC-PMC decided unilaterally what the social and economic needs of the locals of Ophathe Mission were and also decided on the solutions without consultation with the people on the ground. Very little progressive was made in the area of development both on land and human resources. The community had no grassroots structures of representation and the Mission Overseer appointed by ELC-PMC did not consult people before 'community projects' were begun. This way of doing things was not acceptable to the Ophathe Mission inhabitants and it also militated against the objectives of development of ELC-PMC. It was a top-bottom arrangement which defeated the ends of progress.

(a) *Land for agriculture*

Ophathe Mission is situated on fertile land, land which can be used for both horticulture/husbandry as well as crop plantation. There is however virtually no land for pasturing herds of cattle that the community was able to accumulate during this period of socio-political transformation which at the moment is enveloping the whole country. Local people have always relied heavily upon

tilling the land allocated to them for use. This available land has proved to be inadequate when one takes into account the growth of people in the area. Most of the young people who have reached 18 years are jobless. They have thus been forced to surviving through agriculture.

ELC-PMC has recently secured two vast tracts of land (Amasimu), for agricultural development, which have been earmarked for communal use. The community elders are enthused with the prospects of ploughing these huge fields for both subsistence and profit. In going about this endeavour, ELC-PMC consulted the community through its grassroots representative body,, the Ophathe Mission Farm Committee, and had overwhelming support from the local population. The fields are owned by ELC-PMC and are to be managed by trustees from within the community itself.

The view of the Ophathe Farm Committee is that this dimension of development has raised the expectations and hopes of the locals. They also feel that it is appreciated by their constituency and that it is going to be viable once certain stumbling blocks have removed. The committee maintains however, that the local population should be intensively trained in the way the fields are to be used to make the programme sustainable and even profitable. They are confident that the proposed training would facilitate the transformative process of community empowerment.

This sentiment was also echoed by the young people who were interviewed who argued that if there was training devised for locals they would be willing to throw their weight behind the proposed agricultural programme. They were also optimistic that programmes of this nature among others would remarkably diffuse the potential for criminal and political violence. All members of the Ophathe congratulate ELC-PMC for this bold move.

(b) *Water for irrigation and domestic use*

The acquisition of land for agricultural utility has an inherent problem in that there is scarcity of water in the area. There is a canal running through the Ophathe Mission settlement. The farm committee claims that it was built by the first Hermannsburg missionaries as a means of irrigating the Ophathe Farm at the beginning of the century. It was subsequently bought by the Muden Water Board and up to date belongs to the latter.

Currently ELC-PMC is negotiating with the aforementioned Water Board for the acquisition of the canal. The canal is available to ELC-PMC for R80 000. The locals argue that ELC-PMC can afford to raise the required amount but have not communicated this thinking to ELC-PMC. They are adamant that the management company of ELCSA can fulfil this obligation without much difficulty. In fact, they are becoming frustrated that nothing has materialized from this enterprise. In my view this situation has the capacity to sour the relationship between the locals and ELC-PMC if it is not handled sensitively. This is because

people in the area have become solely dependent as a legacy of the past where the church used to do things for the people without their initiative. Whether or not the church company will be able to meet this expectation will be left to time.

The other practical problem related to water is the conspicuous scarcity of water to use in the households. People have to fetch water from the river because there is no reservoir or reticulation system for water. The water they use for domestic purposes is therefore not just unclean but it is also unhygienic. There was an outbreak of cholera some time in the past and a lot of people had to be hospitalised. Water to drink and to wash clothing and kitchen utensils is therefore an epidemic threat to the whole community.

The situation becomes exasperated during times of drought when the streams go dry. It is a pressing problem which ELC-PMC is looking into at present with the Farm committee. The people are convinced that the canal will solve the crisis irrespective of the financial implications. It should be said here that this is the view of the ordinary people on the ground and not necessary the idea of the Farm Committee. To the contrary, the Farm Committee is of the opinion that the local population should begin to contribute towards the project of acquiring the canal so that there is something of self-initiative that is directly linked to the availability of water in the area.

(c) *Education*

On the education front there has been some development, however mediocre. In the Ophathe Mission there is only one primary school called Uphathe and at the Mudén Mission (about one kilometre away), is a combined institution incorporating classes from class 1 up to standard 9. The latter is called Leje Combined as it accommodates all pupils under one roof.

Both these physical buildings were donated by ELC-PMC to the two communities of Ophathe and Mudén Mission for use by local children. Most of the teachers come from outside the communities because of the inadequacy of local professionally trained teachers.

It is my submission that ELC-PMC had good intentions by giving the schools to the communities. However, this gesture also raised expectations of greater things to come from the management company in the area of education. It therefore inadvertently inculcated a self-defeating sense of dependency from within the Ophathe community in particular in that people began to look up to ELC-PMC for most equipment related to the institutions' upgrading. The local community has acquiesced to being recipients of social hand-outs. This arrangement normally diminishes any sense of self-initiative and self-reliance. The Ophathe community is therefore not an exception in this regard.

It is also important to observe that the schools are under the direct management of ELC-PMC. It is not self-evident as to whether or not the ELCSA company

intends to relinquish its hold on the schools to the new Department of Education. What is clear though is that if the grip on the institutions is sustained, ELC-PMC will struggle to make ends meet financially in terms of maintaining the schools, given the policy of free education that has recently been implemented.

At the time the interviews were conducted there were negotiations with Natal Parks Board for the donation of material for the building of prefabs as additional classrooms for the pupils at the Muden Mission. Again, how far this endeavour will succeed will depend entirely upon the understanding reached between all parties involved.

(d) *Health*

Both the Farm Committee and their constituency were unanimous in regarding the area of health as one of the most sensitive spheres of social need within the Ophathe community. The community is at the moment being medically serviced by the Greytown Municipal Council which is about 30-40 kilometres from the area. There is also a mobile clinic that attends to the vaccination needs of the children in the community. The ordinary people in the community argue that this service is grossly inadequate when one reviews the needs the community has in the area of primary health. There are sometimes domestic accidents related to fire and also related to children drinking poisonous or toxic substances in the family and in those circumstances there is virtually no first aid or localised primary health facilities to redress the situation at hand.

Also pregnant women have enormous difficulty having access to prenatal amenities and often have to travel to Greytown when labour begins. This situation increases the risk of a high infant mortality rate given the disquieting absence of medical and nursing personnel in the area. Being a rural community Ophathe has no ready access to telephone facilities which thing complicates the position of women expecting babies.

The farm committee asserted that the remedial option would be to introduce paramedics in the Mission. They argued that the alternative to that was bringing *onompilo* (nursing assistants) into the area to deal with day-to-day health needs of the community. However, this noble idea has not been communicated to ELC-PMC accordingly so that jointly with the farm committee representations are made to the relevant authorities. There is in my view a strong case for the introduction of some primary health agency while the negotiations for the erection of a permanent structure are in progress.

The grassroots leadership was tongue-tight about the community taking initiative in this direction. They again put the local responsibility on the doorstep of ELC-PMC. They nonetheless agreed that they would soon be introducing the urgency of the need and propose a joint enterprise with ELC-PMC in terms of approaching the Department of Health about the issue.

(e) *Community-based women empowerment programmes*

In the meeting of the community members which was called for Wednesday 8th February 1995, the women highlighted some areas of self-initiated development schemes that have since become defunct:

(i) *The fields*

The land that was acquired for agricultural development was cleared by the local women once the fields were identified. One of the informants, a Mrs Dladla, said:

"We prepared the land out of our own financial effort without asking for assistance from the ELC-PMC. This notwithstanding we have subsequent to that initiative run out of funds. It was women who started the preparation of the fields which was an indication that, funds permitting, we would have begun with land tillage programmes. But now we do not have money (*asisenamali*)."

(ii) *Handcraft project*

The Ophathe Mission women began making dowels, food, nets and tablecloths out of their initiative. The project had no external funding and was owned by the local women. Management was local and local participation was maximized. However, the women again ran short of money that would sustain the project because, among other things, the people involved lacked administrative and bookkeeping skills.

The women claimed that they have made ELC-PMC aware of the dysfunction of this project and asked for assistance which, to date, has not come forth. My view is that it would make little or no difference to get monetary assistance from ELC-PMC if the incumbents have not been trained in the areas where there has been lack of skills. The handcraft enterprise will not be viable until the pioneers have been enabled with the necessary skills by any willing development agency even if it means paying for the training services offered.

(iii) *Candle-making*

Again, this women-empowerment project of making candles was a local initiative that provided employment opportunities for women in the area. It was their brainchild and they harnessed its success. They claim to have sold thousands of candles to local inhabitants but that there was a problem with transport, a mobility mechanism that would market their product within and beyond Ophathe. This was a sensible and practical attempt because there is no electricity operative in the community. It was therefore a sustainable vision.

Unlike in the other instances, the women had skills in the area of candle-making. But then they had no accommodation wherein the project would be housed, especially when the weather would not be conducive to outdoor activity. They started in the local church building but were soon overwhelmed by the need to accommodate pre-school children who had nowhere to go. In giving way to the kids they not only faced the accommodation crisis but also finances

were being spent largely in meeting transportation costs. With all these hindrances the candle-making project also went defunct.

Because of the glimpse of success in this endeavour, the failure of the candle-making economic empowerment project demoralised the local women and subsequently they approached ELC-PMC for financial assistance. "*Abelungu bayazi ngenkinga yethu kodwa abenzi lutho*" ("the white people know about our plight but they are doing nothing about solutions"), was the strong sentiment expressed by the grandmothers of the Ophathe community. The argument is that even where socially and economically transformative programmes have been initiated by the local population, the Mission management is not delivering the goods.

This in turn diminishes the confidence the locals have in the area managers and increases the capacity for conflict between the locals and the church. This view was also expressed by the Farm Committee who argued that the people were cooperative but doubted the *bona fides* of the church where the latter was supposed to meet their obligations. My view is that this observation is more of a concern than an accusation because the Farm Committee is still optimistic that the situation will be remedied by more bilateral consultations between them and ELC-PMC so as to resuscitate the candle-making project.

(e) *The local government elections (October/November 1995)*

ELC-PMC development worker, Jotham Myaka, who is a member of the community resident at the Mudén Mission, observed that there were preparations under way to inform and educate the Ophathe and Mudén Mission communities about the forthcoming local elections, from the point of view of ELC-PMC. He conceded that there was shortage of manpower regarding their intentions. Most young people were not in the area due to the search for job opportunities in the cities. However, the plans were going ahead as was intended. This process was the church's contribution to democratising governance in the area.

In the wake of the scarcity of human resources the local leadership was under a lot of pressure to organize alternative mechanisms of reaching the people where they are. The Farm Committee in liaison with Myaka was planning to organize workshops for the community on the issue of local elections. Through these measures they hoped to achieve their intentions.

Myaka maintained that despite the enthusiasm in the community about the elections there was confusion because "rural communities are not well organized politically". They intended therefore to seek provision of training from non-governmental organizations as well as from Provincial Government. They also had a problem in the surrounding farms reaching the farm workers since

the success thereof entirely depended upon the political attitude of the farm owners.

Furthermore, the church from its side, wanted to make sure that in preparing for the elections, party politics would not be a determining factor. The community would be encouraged to vote for people for what those people offered to do in terms of development as well as meeting the socio-economic needs of the local population. The church is trying, almost successfully at this stage, to diffuse the potential for political divisions that have ravaged nearly the whole of KwaZulu-Natal through internecine violence.

There is apprehension though in view of the current discordant race relations, as to what impact this will have on the local elections. The Farm Committee, as well as Myaka, argue that colour could be a decisive factor during the elections, because of racism that reigns on the farms. Farm workers could be victimised by their employers for voting for their own people. This anxiety is founded, given the recent conflict based on land disputes in the neighbouring Weenen area.

The role of the elections with regard to development is also undeterminable "because white farmers are putting their needs foremost rather than the needs of the workers". The former are allegedly exploiting the possibility of unilaterally receiving and mispending resources to be allocated for the elections. These fears accurately demonstrate, in my view, the extent of racial polarisation in the area.

3.3.1 The KwanZimela Conference on Community Development²¹

In June, 1993 the Southern Eastern Diocese of the ELCSA authorities together with ELC-PMC personnel met with the farm committees at Kwanzimela. The goals of the meeting were succinctly clear and *inter alia* included:

- "1. To provide a forum for the farm committees;
2. To establish an ELC-PMC/ farm committees' representative body;
3. To debate and gain further understanding on the development process on the ELC-PMC community farms;
4. To share information on specific issues relating to the administration and management of the farms; and
5. To debate the barriers to development on the farms and propose solutions to overcome these barriers" (1993 Appendix A).²²

These objectives and goals of the first tripartite meeting between the church structures of governance; the company managing the church community farms and the community representatives were jointly formulated. Put differently, there existed transparency, broad-based consultation and joint decision -making from the beginning of this process of collectively seeking a common vision on development. These precepts and tenets of democracy were used as the unifying principles of the entire negotiations process. ELC-PMC was rectifying the mistakes and omissions of the past.

21. A report on the Annual ELC-PMC/Farm Committee meeting (19-20 June, 1993).

22. Appendix A of the Annual report of ELC-PMC Development Section.

Because the distance between the fifteen farms managed by the PMC under the overall jurisdiction of the ELCSA was wide, all parties expressed the need to form an all-inclusive forum of the farm committees. The forum would facilitate communication between the various community and exchange ideas on the means of improving the existing situation. It would further ensure that the incumbent communities would own the process of development without the 'top-bottom' structural interference. When people share common problems and impediments in their struggle for self-reliance and self-empowerment, there is often an omnipresent zeal to ceaselessly work towards the resolution of those problems and impediments. This was the intention of establishing a forum for farm committees. It was further appropriate to found a democratically representative structure of all stakeholders for the development process to benefit the communities in question. Again, broad-based representation would give legitimacy and credibility to the undertakings proposed by the leadership of all parties. To corporately explore the intrinsic dynamics of the development process was inextricably linked to the necessity of an all representative structure.

The fourth objective of the conference was, as has been stated earlier, to crystallise matters related to administration and management of the farms. Farm residents and farm workers could easily misconstrue the terms of their residence *vis-a-vis* the terms of ownership and managements of the farms by the ELC-PMC. It was therefore, fundamentally significant to preempt issues concerning this dichotomous relationship to avoid confusion and inherent ambiguities from the part of the farm committees and their respective constituencies.

Finally, the need to identify barriers to the development process was crucial in that it provides the stakeholders the opportunity to remove those barriers expeditiously. It also affords the incumbent participants time to curb other potential obstacles from derailing the development process. It further precipitates a situation whereby the process of development is intermittently and consistently evaluated; subjecting it to vigorous scrutiny and identifying the strengths and flaws of the process itself.

In the context of the aforesaid conference, the role of the ELC-PMC, as a management and resource agency, was to endeavour:

"... to work hand in hand with the local communities and empower them with knowledge, information and skills so that they will stand on their own in handling the challenges they will encounter in the future" (1993: 3).

Regarding the diversity of perceptions and activities among the stakeholders, the role of the ELC-PMC was to:

"... assist each party involved to look at the identical facts in a fresh way and to find a way forward for socio-economic upliftment of the communities on the church farms" (1993: 3).

In both instances the ELC-PMC involvement with respect to the development of the farm communities is to facilitate the on-going transformation of these communities towards social betterment, and economic upliftment. It stands to reason, therefore, that the ELC-PMC did not arrogate to itself the position of superiority and individual, selfish

benefit over and above other participants. The development section of the ELC-PMC was simply and comprehensively limited to equipping the communities with the necessary skills, the latter to utilise the resources at their disposal as effectively and productively as possible. With the acquired skills, the farm communities would "react to local conditions within the national context" (1993: 4). They would be able to articulate their local needs and problems, and respond to them appropriately; consciously evaluating their struggles within a broader context of community development.

The conference further related community development in the farms to specific legal aspects inherent in the process. Matters concerning firebreaks, civil action for damages, the problem of stray cattle, railway fences and rentals, were all given vigorous attention. The whole legislation affecting the management of the farms was provided for each farm committee to study and utilise accordingly.

For the development process to take root in the local communities, the conference resolved to analyze the existing situation and to critically uncover the historical factors leading to it. Some of the realities emerging from the deliberations with regard to the slow pace in the area of development, were collectively identified as follows:

- "1. The three main players in the farms' development process were not equals, there is domination taking place.

2. The farm committees lack the administration and management skills, as well as certain knowledge, necessary to manage the farms.
3. Existing communication channels are not working within and between the different structures.
4. The ELC-PMC often finds itself talking "for" the communities and that there is no community "voice".
5. Poor participation by some of the farm committee members; especially by most pastors/diocesan representatives.
6. Lack of trust between the three role-players (1993: Appendix 1).

These factors, among others, were identified as contributing to retrogression in the development process. There had to be openness; introspection and frankness from all participants for this conference to be progressive and relevant to the issues at stake. These discoveries necessitated in turn a need to remedy the existing situation and to collectively charter a sustainable way forward. The way forward was jointly designed to include the following new principles:

- "1. The *farm* communities speak for themselves.
2. A "common vision" is developed which is internalized by all the players.
3. All parties are informed about what is happening.
4. The players trust each other and believe in each other.

5. All players are assisted in acquiring full knowledge; that is, such knowledge as is necessary to manage and develop the community sections of the farms.
6. The abilities of all are utilised in achieving the aim of development" (1993, Appendix 2).²³

The above six values adopted as guiding principles for enhancing the process of development in the 15 farms, in my opinion, highlight the positive impact of the Kwanzimela Conference upon the entire future of development in ELC-PMC community farms. Having clinically analyzed barriers to development, the participants emerged with a new vision of rural community development. All stakeholders were henceforth going to strive for transparency in their transactions; they were corporately going to ensure that domination was eliminated. There was to come forth viable grassroots participation in the decision-making structures - the Farm Communities were then going to co-own the development process without external organs claiming to be their mouthpiece. Most of the tenets of any democratic undertaking were going to be fully implemented. This development, in my view, would ensure broad-based communication and consultation; and would therefore, induce consensus before any stage of development was attempted. In a nutshell these six principles, I will argue, form the basis upon which the ELC-PMC; SED and the farm committees should have first organised their seminal interaction and communal ambition to concretize the

23. This is Appendix 2 of the Annual Report of ELC-PMC Development Section.

development vision in the 15 farms, rural communities. The church therefore, has lessons to draw from the Kwanzimela Conference proceedings and creative dynamics, as did all participants.

3.3.2 The Ophathe Farm Committee's response to the conference

This subsection is a summary of the Ophathe Farm Committee's assessment of the Kwanzimela Conference which was organized to evaluate the process of development within the 15 church farm communities that are under the direct management of ELC-PMC. It will concentrate primarily on the goals of the conference, the proceedings around which Conference revolved and the resolutions adopted at the Conference.

(a) *The goals of the Conference*

The Farm Committee felt that the objectives of the conference were of considerable significance because in their opinion an all-embracing forum that comprised of all the farm committees would be an ideal structure to share the common problems and frustrations that made the development endeavours in their respective communities difficult to achieve. The forum would provide a platform from which all communities under ELC-PMC would exchange ideas on how to deal with development issues much more constructively; that is, dealing with development in a way that would cement the committees' working relationship with ELC-PMC. In their view therefore, the conference was a step in the right direction.

The Ophathe Farm Committee also felt that the all-encompassing representative body formed of ELC-PMC and farm committees from all 15 communities would facilitate elimination of unwarranted suspicion that had been experienced prior to the conference, even if this was latent. An all-representative structure would also enhance a trilateral liaison mechanism that would ensure smooth flow of information from one level to another and thus enhance chances of development.

They also welcomed the intention of Conference to clarify, with all parties involved, things that obstructed development at local level. This had to necessarily include a frank discussion on management and administration issues so that all participants at the conference would not claim authority where this was in fact misplaced.

(b) *Proceedings at Conference*

The Ophathe Farm Committee observed that issues to be tackled at Conference were all of substantial importance given the hurdles over which all the participants had to jump in the area of development. The vision had to be crystallized to motivate the grassroots leadership without, in the process, alienating the management. The ideas exchanged at the Conference would build mutual confidence between local leaders and ELC-PMC and avoid putting a strain on one party by the other.

Furthermore, it was a sensible remedial strategy to do a post mortem of the failures and the causes of those failures, if progress was to be realized at local development level. There had to be brainstorming sessions that would identify barriers and obstacles of the past before a prosperous future could be purposefully chartered. Again, the committee maintained that the proceedings reflected a new sense of democratizing the system of governance by the church agency, something that was a luxury in the past. The sense of openness that prevailed during the conference was most heartening to all farm committees.

The Ophathe committee felt also that even the confrontation that emerged during the proceedings was healthy and inevitable if the issues at stake were to be dealt with sincerely and productively. It was, in a strange sense, necessary confrontation that would ultimately lead to transformation of attitudes and result in the process the transformation of local situations.

(c) *Resolutions*

For the members of the Ophathe Farm Committee the resolutions taken at the Conference were practical as they were within a sphere of implementation. They were also assessable such that if there was a problem they could reasonably be reviewed and evaluated. Of cardinal significance for the Ophathe Committee was the idea of the autonomy of the farm committees to represent their constituency without having management interpret the needs of the community for the people. In other words a complete control of the process of development

would provide a sense of owning the programmes that were to be initiated. This was possible if the farm committees would speak for themselves.

In the final analysis the resolutions enabled the community leadership to renew their commitment to the development programme, that were already being put into place. The proposals infused the committees with a sense of equal partnership with the church and its business subsidiary, the fact that ELC-PMC was an assistance structure and not necessarily a 'boss' to command and instruct. Particularly, the transparency that would inform the new approach was commended by the Ophathe leadership as the pillar of democracy that would be safeguarded from the grassroots up to the level of management.

The whole Conference was therefore an empowering and an emancipatory experience for the Ophathe Farm Committee in that it provided them with a forum within which they could creatively articulate the developments on the ground in an atmosphere of freedom and support both from their counterparts as well as from ELC-PMC. It was the beginning of a new era, a process that would, in a profound way, lead to social and economic transformation.

3.3.3 Conference lessons for the church on community development

It is evident from the deliberations of the Kwanzimela Conference that all the participants emerged with a renewed and transformed attitude around rural community development issues. Both the process leading to and around which the issues at stake

revolved; as well as the content of the deliberations, favourably contributed to the courageous resolutions adopted at the end of the Conference. There are several, profound lessons for the church to draw from the Kwanzimela Conference, particularly if it is to impact positively upon rural socio-economic and political reconstruction of the African peasant communities. I will argue that the package of the objectives of the Conference largely encapsulate some of the aspects which could benefit the church in the long run. Other substantive and pertinent matters to learn from are embodied in the content of resolutions that were the final product of the Conference.

In this subsection I intend to highlight, in brief, areas of utmost significance which could fundamentally shape the church's future intentions on rural land and community development. The church can, among others lessons, learn the following for its own future reference:

1. Democracy is a phenomenon that has to be translated into viable, pragmatic programmes. In other words, democracy is more than just a conceptual entity that is residue in political discourses. It has the inherent capacity to be productively and effectively enacted and ground into ordinary, daily lives.
2. Democracy has intrinsically crucial aspects which, if grossly ignored, impact adversely even upon well-meaning intentions and objectives. It has as its central leverage extensive and broad-based consultation on all issues from all participants as well as transparency. These two vital dimensions tend to

minimise and often eliminate the element of suspicion from the underdog for whom the development programme is intended.

3. The church has to learn again that balance and evenness of power relations among participants are of fundamental significance if the process of consulting on development is to be meaningful and transformative. This is because a sense of inferiority and low self-esteem from the community representatives and a sense of superiority from the financiers of the programmes often account for the paralysis and failure of many development "projects". Relations of power, therefore, have to be brought to congruency if unity in purpose and harmony in interests is to be achieved. However, this equalisation of power and the mechanisms to bring it about remains a challenge to all churches involved in development.
4. Collective-decision making induces a profound sense of commitment from all participants. There is thus no room left for abdicating responsibility. It also reduces to minimum mutual pointing of fingers for assignments not diligently accomplished. Everyone is part of the mainstream structure that takes and implements decisions. Furthermore, there is accountability to the respective constituencies that in the first mandated all those in leadership engaged in the development process.
5. Equitable representation in structures dealing with rural reconstruction and development will, to a larger extent, diffuse potential for roughshod domination

of the communities and their leadership - for example domination by the church and management personnel. It will also ensure an all-inclusive commitment to the achievement of intended objective without subjugation by the powerful and sense of defeat from the grassroots leadership.

6. Finally, a democratic way of doing things will ensure that the process of consultation; transparency; open-ended communication; collective decision-making; corporate evaluation of the process of development and revisiting the legal dimensions of the whole enterprise, among others, will benefit all parties engaged in the development process. Potential problems like obstacles to the development process will also be preempted and attended to before they effect damage upon the rebuilding and reshaping of the rural communities.

I will submit that there may be more than the six above-mentioned lessons to extract from the Kwanzimela conference. However, I have distilled those which have a particular relevance for the church and its prospective agenda on development and reconstruction of the peasant rural communities inhabited in the main by Africans.

SECTION D

4. THE WAY FORWARD TOWARD LAND RESTITUTION

This subsection consists of arguments that have been put forward to lay foundations for a comprehensive land restitution process. They are drawn from a conglomerate range of sociological and politico-legal factors as well as theological views, suggesting options on land restoration. It is significant that we become conscious of their diversity, for the intention is not to necessarily harmonise them but to highlight alternatives that could be cross-pollinated and implemented if possible.

4.1 Socio-economic and political considerations

A.J. van der Walt in his article "The Future of Common Law Landownership"²² argues that the colonial understanding of landholding is that:

"... property ownership is an absolute and indivisible right. It is described as absolute in the sense that it allows the owner to do with the object of his right whatever is not expressly forbidden by law. It also means, in principle, that ownership is free from the State control and intervention, so that all restrictions are seen as exceptions to the rule, even when they in fact amount to substantial limitations" (1991: 31).

22. van der Walt, A.J. (ed.) (1991): *Land Reform and the Future of Landownership in South Africa*.

He goes on to explicate the socialist criticism of private land ownership as based upon the colonial absolutist notion of ownership. Private property ownership, as he concurs with the socialist perception, allows the owner to use his right to exploit others; thereby inhibiting the State from intervening with sufficient restrictions and effective reforms.

However, van der Walt goes beyond the socialist critique of private ownership towards criticising the socialist *modus operandi* on property rights as equally absolutist and indivisible only as benefiting the State instead of individuals. He contends that the rights on land and the means of production are reserved for the State whereas the individual is afforded absolute rights on consumer goods only. He asserts:

"What is needed to overcome the problems posed by contemporary land law is not nationalisation, but a move away from absolutism in all its forms" (1991: 31).

Put differently, van der Walt is advocating for an interface between individual and State rights of ownership. This means that:

"... ownership should be a fundamentally limited right, which allows the owner certain entitlement with regard to the object, which contains certain inherent limitations within which the owner must exercise his entitlement, and which places him under certain inescapable duties, obligations and responsibilities towards others and towards society" (1991: 32).

In a nutshell, then, we can conclude with van der Walt that various patterns of ownership and of other property rights may differ according to the nature and function of the object under consideration. For instance land earmarked for social infrastructure could be held differently from mining rights or holding rights on property for residence.

In concluding his argument on common law land ownership, van der Walt maintains that

"... any real solution to the land issue will have to strive towards the development of a well-planned but flexible and diverse system of land rights that can reflect the diversity of land-use relations, meanwhile simultaneously providing every individual land right with maximum tenurial security" (1991: 34).

C.R.M. Dlamini reflecting on the past dynamics of landownership and reform on customary law argued, in concurrence with many other scholars, that Apartheid legislation on land "led to a skewed land distribution patterns, with a land law which did not serve and was not responsive to the needs of the people, especially people of colour" (1991: 37).²³ He goes further to observe that the apartheid ideology:

"... was based upon the ideal of spatial separation of blacks from whites, coupled with the restriction of the availability of landownership for black

23. Dlamini, C.R.M. (1991) 'Landownership and customary land reform', in *Land Reform and the Future of Landownership in South Africa*.

people. Blacks consequently regarded the land law as being inequitable and unjust. For this reason new thinking must foster equal access to land" (1991: 38).

Because of the historical occurrences of uneven land distribution based upon land apartheid, Dlamini is advocating for a new restitutive approach that will ensure equal access to land. Dlamini does not venture to forward mechanisms that will make the ideal of restoration concrete. However, I will argue that his argument is sensible and indispensable as a premise from which land restitution and the redress of past inequalities should proceed. Equal access to land should be the mainstay of the entire democratic process, making certain that the costly mistakes of the past are not repeated.

In her article 'Ownership and tenure',²⁴ Tessa Marcus alludes to the fact that the repeal of land legislation and related laws would favourably nurture land reform to the benefit of the majority of South Africans. The repeal would "remove the base of political dispossession of the African majority in particular, and blacks in general" (1991: 33). In other words, it would restore the political rights to land ownership of the African masses, which the latter have been denied by law since the promulgation of the Land Act of 1913.

24. Marcus, T. (1991): 'Ownership and Tenure' in *A Harvest of Discontent: The Land Question in South Africa*.

Marcus maintains further that the repeal of land apartheid legislation would precipitate an upsurge towards all forms of tenancy. She writes "This would bring some benefits to a grossly deprived black majority, although tenancy under these conditions generates new problems" (1991: 33). Among these are illegal tenancy relations in both urban and rural communities which obversely have minimized the accommodation crisis to hundreds of black families. She aptly concedes that in rent-related situations tenants would have their meagre financial resources consumed by the rent instead of investment into production and consumption. Put in another way, the landowners would entrench their already powerful position when the repeal of racially divisive land legislation stimulates new forms of tenancy, particularly because "rent on private property would stimulate all forms of abuse and exploitation" (1991: 33).

The most fundamental contribution by Marcus to the land debate, in my view however, is her unwavering advocacy for nationalisation of the land. According to Marcus, "although nationalisation of the land is not a cure-all for all land-related ills, it is an essential measure if these [ills] are to be restored to the satisfaction of the majority of South Africans" (1991;34). For her, nationalisation transfers the right of ownership to the State. She argues that nationalisation of land will not necessarily ruin agricultural production as most critics of the nationalisation option contend. She persuasively explains:

"The land may be nationalised while the ownership of commercial agricultural enterprises (or indeed industrial, commercial and service

enterprises) remains in the hands of private individuals and companies" (1991: 35).

Wholesale rationalisation of the land would then transform all relations of land holding into tenancy relations. This arrangement would ensure that no one individual or group, however economically viable, lays a sole claim to any small unit of land.

There are several social, economic and political dividends that emanate from this option of nationalising land - whether partial or total. I concur with Marcus when she says:

"The state is thereby able, at one and the same time, to gain revenue from rent which will be channelled into the social wage for the benefit of all; to regulate and control the terms of tenancy to ensure minimum exploitation, especially of the weakest and those with least resources; and to support those who have historically been dispossessed" (1991: 35).

This process would eliminate the plight of many African small-scale farmers who have been denied credit facilities in the apartheid era and further do away with the land market system whereby large sums of capital were exhausted by both black and white farmers in buying or hiring agricultural land. Marcus concludes by forcefully asserting:

"Furthermore, and in general, where the state represents the majority of South Africans, then the transfer of land into state hands unquestionably means transfer of land from whites to blacks not as individuals, but collectively" (1991: 35).

I would go beyond this contention by Marcus to argue that it is insufficient a measure for the majority government to expropriate all land and to make the State the sole landholder. The State has to develop, in consultation with other social, financial and farmer/agricultural agencies, strategies on how best to subsidise the peasant communities with respect to the global setting of farming. A policy on subsidisation of farming will alleviate the plight of both small and commercial farmers; both black and white. Black farmers in particular would invariably need equipment, fertilisers, seed, tools, and other such materials to develop the land or farm on it. However, more significant to recognise is the fact that the whole enterprise of peasant, rural community involvement begins with the State owning all land for reasons advanced above. Collective or State ownership of land would put into motion the process of redressing imbalances and inequities of the past in a more pragmatic and tangible way. It is imperative and indeed significant to acknowledge the fact that nationalisation is one of several other land restoration mechanisms.

Christodoulou, in his book *The Unpromised Land* (1990),²⁵ asserts that institutionalisation of access to land is another way of revolutionizing land control. He observes:

"Control over land has, over the millennia, contained an element of force or assertion of power. This is connected with the vital role of land in sustaining human society and with the scarcity of productive land in relation to needs ... Institutionalisation is a way of setting norms or agreed positions to smooth the path of human relations" (1990: 15).

He then highlights the merits of institutionalisation with regard to African customary arrangements regulating human relations in connection with control and use of land, He develops his argument thus:

"Assuming that the African experience of institutionalisation of access to land in customary land tenure systems is universally valid, the key norm would be that he who clears and brings land into cultivation could claim exclusive use of the area, by himself and his family, and usually also by his descendants. In the course of time this tends to form a constellation of such group land units and the need arises for a coherent and common approach to protection and defence of the land pertaining to a wider kinship group of early pioneers. This becomes a rudimentary land

25. Christodoulou, D. (1990): *The Unpromised Land - Agrarian reform and conflict worldwide*.

administration and may be merged with wider quasi-state power used to regulate other affairs of the wider kinship group" (1990: 15).

Christodoulou's contention is valid and especially relevant to the rural terrain when one considers the past tenurial rights in the remote countryside before the advent of land apartheid. It is a method of customary landholding used in rural communities also before the balkanisation of South Africa through the homeland system. It afforded every member of the community an opportunity to use land for subsistence by the family as well as by the subsequent generations. There was also in this customary arrangement an "obligation to use the land; otherwise it reverts to the group and is liable for allocation to other group members in need" (1990: 15). In this way land is made accessible to the whole community without bureaucratic complications about who owns it. People had the right to occupy and use the land outside of statutory entrapments imposed by the introduction of property law designed in Europe or North America. As community elders would say in KwaZulu "*Izwe Lonke Elenkosi*" - that is, "All Land belongs to the King".

Christodoulou concludes the African institutionalisation of access to land approach by conceding that the process engenders a hierarchical system of sovereignties that consolidates steadily. More or less, it assumes "a natural growth undisturbed by intrusions, conquests or plundering by marauding groups or by invading superior forces" (1990: 16). In a nutshell then, even if institutionalisation becomes what it means

in terms of access to land, namely an institutionalised entity with a hierarchical structure of sovereignties, it ensures that there is no one in the local community that is fundamentally landless. I would argue further that the land ethic in that rural setting guarantees food security and certifies land accessibility to posterity in a flexible and yet controllable way.

In corroboration of Christodoulou's notion of communitarian land tenure and use Whitemore asserts that

"... traditionally, land in Africa was held in common. Communities were self-reliant and developed a high level of social solidarity and egalitarianism. Land was abundant, so the system governing tenure and control of land was based on the need for labour to clear the land in order to bring it under cultivation" (1981: 15).

According to Whitemore, the person who cleared the land became the owner and the heirs continued to own land as a group, each family unit having the inalienable right to sufficient land for its own subsistence. He writes: "Thus, group ownership and individual usage of land become the norm" (1981: 15).²⁶ Agricultural development for commercial purposes was thus introduced by Western colonial administration, bringing a model of land tenure and control that created and intensified landed and landless classes in Africa.

26. Whitemore, C. (1981): *Land for People - Land Tenure and the Very Poor*.

In both Christodoulou's and Whitemore's models of African land use and control, there is little room for domination and exploitation of individuals by groups or of weaker groups by dominant groups. There was a sense of moderation and the egalitarian spirit inculcated through this communitarian system minimised poverty and landlessness. There was no landlord, no tenant, no government agency and no multinational companies to compete with. There further was no bureaucratic force to frustrate the ordinary peoples' intentions on land tenure and utility. Even power relations harnessed a sense of belonging together where there was no starvation except when natural disasters like drought struck the village and crop yield was poor.

Furthermore, in this communitarian system of land tenure and use, the social concept brought to bear obligations; duties and other related responsibilities that governed access to land. Members of the family, the village, the community and eventually the whole society who entertained lethargy and were apathetic, were not accommodated in this scheme of events. Everyone had to work on the land and harvest their family crop for sustenance, and in my view, this system eliminated changes for current perceived agricultural stagnation.

In conclusion, we can say that land restoration in South Africa will have to take into serious account the centrality of the rural peasantry. Planning and processing constructively issues of land in communities that were historically dispossessed will invariably have to draw all stakeholders, particularly rural communities on the ground,

for maximum participation and for collective decision-making. Maximizing local participation will harness the ideal of grassroots, rural communities feeling and being part of a development process that will impact directly on their day to day living. It will also afford local participants the opportunity to control and direct the process of human resources as well as community development.

We have in this subsection extensively explored various arguments and ideas around the resolution of the land access; ownership and tenure backlog as is related primarily to the peasant rural communities. Nationalisation of land (part or whole), a communitarian model of land accessibility and utility, the rural African mode of land tenure as well as of the proposed united land ownership pattern of both collective and regulated private ownership have all been put across as possible options for redressing the past land injustices. It has been argued also that they could facilitate a satisfactory, all-embracing process of land restoration for all groups in South Africa. We have, furthermore, so far forwarded only political-legal and sociological perspectives on the land debate and related agro-economic reform options in the South African context. We will next consider a theological or church-initiated contribution of land restoration, especially the suggested process for initiating, monitoring and bringing the process a credibility and legitimacy that it deserves.

4.2 Theological considerations

In this subsection I shall investigate the views on land restitution from a theological perspective or a church-initiated base. As has been said earlier, theological discourse has more often than not fallen short of suggesting pragmatic mechanisms of effecting land restitution. It is, however, central within the scope of this study to highlight and even interrogate observations and suggestions on how best to amicably restore land and to create an atmosphere of cross-racial understanding around land restoration in the South Africa context. I will take into consideration people who were victims of the forced relocations policy, the majority of both urban and rural victims of land discrimination legacy as well as those who were, by law, privileged to have access to land during the Apartheid era. It is appropriate therefore, to synthesize, with the circumstances of the aforementioned groups of people, the approximate mechanisms which could substantially shape the restitution process.

(Some) farmers in Northern Natal, especially those resident around Weenen, express the view of the free enterprise system as an option for blacks to claim their dispossessed land back. Graham McIntosh says: "Blacks can now buy commercial farming land. Land ownership must change on the basis of willing buyer, willing seller?" (1992: 44).²⁷ It will be legitimate and indeed historically explicable, in my view, to

27. Kockott, F. (1992): *The Fields of Wrath - Cattle Impounding in Weenen*.

unequivocally reject the market system being used as the only redress channel. The government initiatives have been abortive because as Winkler argues:

"... after years of destitution caused by forced removals, very few black communities are in a position to buy back the land. What is more, they do not see why they should buy back land which they regard as having been stolen by the government" (Winkler, 1992: 2).²⁸

This assertion by Winkler pertains to all the victims of ideologically and strategically orchestrated landlessness - victims of the resettlement policy and masses of black people who claim their original birthright to South Africa. It also applies to those communities who through the apartheid design were consigned to perpetual poverty through confinement to the homelands.

Winkler continues to suggest a more tangible means of land restoration rights - namely, the physical reoccupation of the land by those communities who were displaced by the removals policy. He states:

"All the cases mentioned in this paper - whether return was negotiated on the land was occupied - demonstrate that it is the physical presence of communities on the land that often leads to effective negotiations. Without the leverage of occupation, communities are stalled in endless

28. Winkler, H. (1992): 'God's Land for God's people: The inalienable right to land' in *Church and Land*.

bureaucratic processes. The government often uses negotiations as a delaying tactic. It is the direct action of return to the land which often breaks a deadlock" (1992: 3).

It is crystal clear that, even though Winkler is not directly agitating for the forcibly removed communities to reoccupy their ancestral lands, this strategy, applied with or without consent from the State, has often been effective. Obviously, there are considerable risks involved for which those communities could pay dearly. Arrest for trespass is one; vigilante attacks from right-wing farmers is the other. Impounding of livestock, as was the case in Weenen - Ncujane - is another variable of harassment for unnegotiated returns. All of these reactionary measures would, however, internationally embarrass the Nationalist government, given its intended programme of political reform.

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa in its October, 1991 conference adopted this significant resolution regarding its role in land restitution processes:

"In view of the initiatives for change in South Africa, Conference asks the government to adopt and implement the principle that land which was expropriated against the owner's will in pursuance of the policy of Apartheid and where the persons concerned were prevented by law from obtaining freehold land, should be restored to its previous and rightful owners; or alternatively that compensation be paid which is

commensurate with the market value of the land, its economic potential and the actual financial loss incurred as a result of expropriation" (1992: 2).²⁹

It is my submission that the above resolution could serve as a policy guideline directing the church on how it could, as a whole unit, approach land restitution question. Like the Rustenburg Declaration resolution, it serves to give direction on the meaningful role of the church around the land conflict. In practice, it calls for prophetic church intervention, particularly making representation to the Government on expropriated land. But more, it suggests that compensation which is compatible to the market value of the land, be paid to those communities and individuals who unjustly lost their land.

I would argue that this idea of compensation is feasible if an all-representative commission is instituted investigating how best to concretize the idea of compensation that is, given the sometimes conflicting land claims, to what extent could compensation be made possible. Again, that if the process of compensation is feasible, this commission be granted powers to make recommendations to a land claims court - solely on matters of compensation. This enterprise would also call for subsidiary agencies of the commission to administer the process of compensation provincially. The terms of reference could then be set through broad consultation involving *inter alia*

29. This resolution was presented as a working document at a workshop held on the 25th and 26th May in 1992 in Stellenbosch, Cape Town. Located in Conradie E.M. (1992) (ed.) *Church and Land*.

the relevant State department, incumbent communities' representatives, the church, organised business and legal experts in human rights and property law. This commission could then subsume the brief legislated for the Advisory Commission on Land Allocation. Matters relating to conflicting land claims in particular, could then be transferred for attention to the land claims court.)

Of fundamental importance in this regard is that a commission of this nature and magnitude should operate transparently and in consultation with all parties concerned. This principle will diffuse the potential for suspicion and mistrust from the sections of the victims. It will also provide a strong basis for moral legitimacy of the commission and further cultivate a sense of accountability for its personnel towards the public. An addendum regarding the composition of the commission is that it transcend the gender, class and race divide to engender the culture of democracy.

Furthermore, the possibility of establishing a land claims court has been mooted by various church agencies. Winkler asserts:

"One of the major demands of the rural communities in response to the white paper (March 1991) has been that a mechanism be created to hear the land claims of those disadvantaged by Apartheid policies, and to adjudicate conflicting land claims. A land claims court was suggested. The government's initial white paper completely ignored this suggestion" (1992: 3).

It is evident from this observation that a land claims court has been put forward as one mechanism, among others, to redress the land impasse and to adjudicate conflicting claims on various pieces of land. The Nationalist Government grossly undermined this possibility which would have set in motion the effecting of a medium to long term land restoration process. I would submit in this context that churches, in this period of transition, have the capacity to lobby for a land claims court to the new democratic government to ensure that the latter aptly intervenes by setting up the necessary structures and required infrastructure to make the land claims court a viable entity. It is also imperative to realise that we have sufficient legal resource manpower to constitute the land claims court personnel, even in the provinces. In other words, a national structure could be put into place but, like the suggested commission on lost land compensation, could devolve responsibilities; duties and powers to act, to provincial, subsidiary bodies to administer the land claims court processes in the provinces. This process could be filtered down to local situations.

Aninka Claasens has this observation to make:

"Given the finite nature of land, people have particular relationships with it. In many cases these have been built-up over generation. The beliefs and needs that people hold and have of land must be incorporated into a future land policy" (1991: 60).³⁰

30. Claasens, A. (1991): 'For whites only - land ownership in South Africa' in *Harvest of Discontent*.

The 'beliefs and needs' in Claasens' statement would include the African world view in general and in particular the notion of land as sacrosanct, the notion of land as a habitat of the ancestral spirits. (The churches should vociferously defend religious tenets linked to the land ethic and advance both political and theological arguments for its stance. The church fought and even condemned apartheid as heretical and inherently evil, it has now to advocate for the rebuilding of social and ecological structures, including the land dimension, to be seen to be impartial and unbiased. It should not desist from agitating for a land claims court as an option for adjudication of land claims.)

Claasens goes further to enumerate several of the needs that the land claims court could take into account in its assignment:

"... the national desire for sovereignty, the need to repair and redress the losses suffered by removed communities in the last ten years, the need for agricultural land on which to produce subsistence crops and graze cattle, the very concrete and immediate need that over-arches rural and urban people - the need for a secure place to live" (1991: 60).

She concedes, however, that there are limitations on land allocation that will confront both the land claims court personnel and the communities where dispossession occurred early on in the history of those affected. In particular to be directly affected are those who currently have no homes around the cities. According to Claasens "they have not only lost their share of land as a national asset, but also their history. They

cannot motivate claims for specific ancestral land" (1991: 61). This argument is sensible and logical when one realistically accepts the fact that some of the land that was dispossessed from its rightful owners has now been extensively developed with a variety of social and economic infrastructure built on it. The implication of this reality is that it will therefore, be naive and downright impossible to expect those peoples whose land was taken ages ago (some of whom have secured permanent residence in the cities), to identify the exact pieces of ground where their property once existed. They will not be able to both motivate and validate their claims.

Winkler concludes his observations by arguing that:

"... the churches are not only a political lobby, they are also landowners. a social organisation, a rural network, and a theological agent ... The churches need to use what political weight they have to put development of our whole economy, urban and rural, on the agenda" (1992: 6).

He maintains further that as a landowner, the churches need to introspectively assess their own self-owned land and set an example to secular bodies on the process of land restitution. Winkler suggests that a register of all church land in South Africa could be compiled by the incumbent churches and legal procedure and criteria be stipulated to reallocate this land to communities who were there before the churches acquired the land in question. Demand for openness and transparency with regard to State-owned

land should be facilitated by the churches displaying the same openness and transparency in land transactions.

The churches therefore, because of their access to most remote rural areas and because they have infrastructure secured in those areas, are better positioned to tackle land restitution at grassroots level in collaboration with local, village authorities. This endeavour, as morally obligatory to the church, will not only help galvanise the rural peoples' critical reflection and consciousness around land matters; but it will also be in a theologically advantageous position to motivate the State to act promptly on the question of land, especially in the peasant rural communities where the plight is most severe. To actualise and realise this vision, Winkler submits:

"The churches must preach the belief of African society that God's people have an inalienable right to God's land. No person owns the land in the sense of being able to buy or sell it; yet every person has a sacred right to access to land to live on. If that is taken seriously and applied consistently, it will restore land to the people, effect real land reform, and revolutionise the rural economy in South Africa" (1992: 7).

In a nutshell, then, it is not adequate for the church to emphasise the Christian concept of justice and equity without tangibly and convincingly putting its own house in order. The church has a biblical mandate to strengthen and exhort the landless in their misery; but it equally has a biblical mandate to warn 'powers and principalities' against

land misappropriation. To do this effectively and consistently, it should begin with itself and then from a strong, high moral ground challenge and encourage the government and other multinational agencies in the economic sector to act in accordance with the Gospel imperatives with regard to property ownership and justice. Conradie sums it up thus:

"Any theological reflection on land issues should include an emphases that the land which people are quarrelling about, does not ultimately belong to them but to God. No one holds land as an absolute right. Land does not belong to private individuals who may do with it as they please ... It belongs to those who lived and worked on it before us and whose memory may still endure" (1992: 15).³¹

In relating to the rural communities, people besieged by landlessness and poverty; people with a glaring lack of socio-economic and political infrastructure to succour them, the church will be irreversibly engaged in a process of essentially transforming those communities. Not only that, it will also be affirming their right to exist. Nürnberger says that "people without land often experience themselves to be considered non-people. Prestige, status, self-esteem and pride can all be attached to land" (1992: 10).³² The church will therefore be facilitating the process of not only

31. Conradie, E.M. (1992): 'The significance of the land issue in South Africa for Christian theology', in *Church and Land*.

32. Nürnberger, K. (1992): 'Theses in the theology of the land in its overall context', in *Church and Land*.

reconstructing the circumstances of existence of the rural communities but it will be seen to be holistically empowering those communities. This is a profound call to a praxis ministry of developing both the people resources, as well as their land and environment.

SECTION E

5. CONCLUSION

It is succinctly clear from the investigation that the sensitivity of the land question - that is, land acquisition, land ownership and land use - will be part of South Africa for a long time to come. The explosive nature of the land debate is cushioned in the legacy of land discrimination that began at the turn of the twentieth century. Land apartheid has inevitably led to racial, class and gender polarisation in the country and the church in South Africa has historically been implicated in this whole crisis. The amiable resolution of the land controversy is crucial for the restoration of racial, class and gender harmony and co-existence, if further conflict is to be creatively averted.

It is also evident that apart from land owned privately by individuals (for example, farmers, chiefs, multinational companies and the State), the future of church-owned land has to be decisively and conclusively resolved. This is possible, especially in view of the development of the rural communities currently resident on various church-owned property, as well as improving the quality of life of the locals through putting in place basic social and economic infrastructure.

Furthermore, I have demonstrated how the legacy of land dispossession of the majority of South Africa's peoples directly and adversely affected, the rural communities in

particular, and how that process has created an albatross for both the government and the church in our country. In interrogating the views of the Ophathe Mission on their existential needs, I also showed how the process of land dispossession in a microcosmic setting served to dehumanize the locals in their quest for belonging and identity. Again,, in this area, I depicted the role the Lutheran Church played in the local situation and its complicity in the past occurrences of land discrimination.

I also tried to highlight various positions suggested by secular agencies and those initiated by the churches in their attempt to resolve the land question in the direction of land and community development. In dealing with this section of study I used the Rustenburg Declaration, and the model of development which ELC-PMC has evolved in effecting land and community development within the particular situation of Ophathe. Here the case study methodology of research was exhaustively utilised to critically examine the local initiatives *vis-a-vis* the development initiatives of ELC-PMC.

Coupled with the observations extracted above, I tried to decipher lessons the church in South Africa could draw from the Conference on Development convened by the SED, ELC-PMC and the different farm committees in Kwanzimela outside Melmouth.

Finally, I presented sociological and theological observations on the way forward with respect to national, comprehensive land restoration and demonstrated how these views impact on the vision for national reconciliation and people empowerment.

5.1 Summary of the main findings

There are several factors that emerged from this investigation which are of considerable significance. However, we need to extract those which relate directly to the experience I had regarding land and community development, especially church land use. The following, in my view, constitute the primary findings of the research as it gradually unfolded:

- (1) The failure of the 'community projects' in the field of development has been based on two broad assumptions: the 'welfare syndrome' and 'relief'.
 - (a) 'Welfare' refers to the approach that considers the local community to be the objects of social hand-outs, where the church has always done things for the people and not with the people. In this instance the organization decides, without consultation, what the needs of the community are and also prescribes solutions to those perceived needs.
 - (b) 'Relief' presupposes that there is a crisis in the community which points toward the need for development. In this case, development is brought about by the existence of that crisis so that when the crisis subsides, the relief mechanism becomes defunct.

Development programmes, on the other hand, take into account the democratic right of the incumbent community to decide what its needs are and what methodology is best applied to tackle those needs. People in the community

know their social, economic, political and religio-cultural nuances and they do not warrant any external interpretation of their local ethos. The people-centred development programmes approach inculcates a sense of the community owning the development programmes with accountability and responsibility as the underlying principles.

- (2) The 'projects approach' has always resulted in failure because the community for whom the 'project' is intended usually had a different opinion of the situation at hand. They have first-hand experience of the conditions of living and therefore, a know-all approach from financiers and developers ('experts') often alienates them from the intentions of these dominant groups who drive the community projects. This miscalculation was, I will argue, one of the reasons that accounted for ELC-PMC's failure in their initiatives for land and community development in the Ophathe Mission.
- (3) Land and community development are more often than not inextricably intertwined. An attempt to dichotomise them largely accounts for the schizophrenic solutions that ultimately derail the programmes on development in the rural areas. What is evident from this study is that, in the rural domain land, people and infrastructure belong together and therefore, in planning to develop them, one should not lose sight of this reality. If one of these is

addressed to the total exclusion of the others, then a rebound is to be expected, a dismal failure.

I will argue that this should be the approach of all institutions willing to address the question of land use and community development in the rural areas. The list includes the government, national and provincial, the church, the NGOs and the financiers/developers. The interrelated nature of land, people and resources should be taken cognizance of, if programmes on development are to succeed.

- (4) It also emerged from the investigation that government involved in the development of rural areas should not be undermined or marginalized. But the role of government should, of necessity, be limited to subsidisation and availability of resources *not* control of the development programmes. Except for direct involvement with respect to land reform - the process of restitution in general, and nationalisation in particular - government participation should be circumscribed to avoid centrally made decisions which in no way relate to the realities on the ground.
- (5) An attempt to democratize church land holding should be encouraged by extending ownership rights of church land to communities who currently have tenant status on church property. The complexities related to this process could be simplified by consulting extra-church agencies for expert advice and guidance.

The risk is worth taking if the church in South Africa hopes to address the question of land and development of human resources holistically and conclusively. This is possible since most communities live and work on the aforesaid church property and they have done so for many decades.

- (6) It is also important to take note of the difference between basic social, economic and political infrastructure that rural communities need, and the programmes of development that communities and development agencies wish to undertake jointly to improve the quality of life of those communities. The installation of the basic amenities is of prime significance, whereas development is an additional facet of empowerment.
- (7) The process of land reform has conspicuously excluded participation by women from the mainstream of discourse about land issues. Not only has the limitation been confined to discourse, but also women have not been treated on equal terms with men when it comes to land ownership and tenurial rights. Ironically, most rural communities are teeming with women who, more often than not, outnumber men. There are also those people who, when men migrate to the cities in search of better employment opportunities, stay behind in the rural areas trying to keep the families intact. They have been discriminated against with respect to the land question.

- (8) The ELC-PMC model of development does not necessarily provide all the answers to all churches with regard to land and community development. However, it does provide a birds' eye view into the intricacies which other churches should take cognizance of before engaging in development. In other words, other churches can learn from the experiences and past flaws of ELC-PMC and from their lessons begin to shape their development plans accordingly.
- (9) The process of land restitution will take a concerted effort from all land stakeholder (that is, the government, the political players, the white farmers, farm workers, the church, development agencies, the credit facility personnel, service organizations, the people on the ground, corporate business and the NGOs) to accomplish successfully. The establishment of the Land Claims court is indispensable to deal with the conflicting land claims from all sides. Otherwise, I will contend that all efforts to redress the land imbalances and inequities and to effect national reconciliation and socio-political transformation will be futile and counterproductive. Justice must be seen to have been done to heal those who have been victimised by land apartheid.

5.2 Critical assessment of the research process

It is important, in my view, to reflect critically upon the process of research and perhaps evaluate the strengths and limitations that, in the main, shaped the process or that were alternatively induced by it. Here I will briefly critique the process and highlight those instances that enhanced or constrained the process. There were intermittent problems that related to the availability of research literature or lack thereof; negotiations with the relevant parties that were directly involved in the empirical investigation, that is, the case study and the availability of resources or lack thereof.

(a) *Strengths*

One of the advantages interconnected to the research process was the topicality of the land question at this moment in the history of South Africa. The resolution of the land impasse is intrinsically interlinked to the socio-political transformation currently taking place in the country. Black and white South Africans are clamouring for land reform for a variety of reasons. For that reason land is a priority item on the agenda of the GNU and the church cannot escape that transformation process, whether voluntarily or under duress.

Also, the commonality of language between the researcher and the subject community was to the favour of all participants. There were minor, if any, barriers in negotiating the meaning of the research intentions and objectives. Except for the high

expectations of the local leadership and their constituency in the direction of development, an issue which was resolved at the negotiation level, there were no visible impediments.

Furthermore, the Farm Committee at Ophathe is a well organized structure in terms of their mandate from the community. This contributed immensely to the smooth flow of the interviewing process, both of the Committee and the members of the community at large. It also created a congruency of the terms of reference of the research process.

Finally, the immediate availability of transport made mobility much easier for the researcher, particularly as a radius of approximately seven kilometres had to be covered in meeting various informants. It also made cross-referencing between the local populations easy, regarding historical events being sought by the researcher.

(b) *Limitations*

It is to be appreciated that the research process was not without constraints and difficulties. The unavailability of sufficient literature on the subject of church land use and community development was one problem the researcher had to contend with. This is why the 'Church and Land' (1992) document was used as a primary source of reference. Perhaps the scarcity of chronicled material on the subject of church, land

and rural development is attributable to the limited nature of the debate on these matters from the standpoint of the church. This observation is indeed contestable.

Again, the negotiations of the researcher's point of entry at the Ophathe Mission were stalled at the ELC-PMC offices. The bone of contention was that the Ophathe community had been exhaustively researched prior to the overtures from the researcher. Several bodies and individuals had subjected the community to intensive surveys without concretely meeting the locals' expectations on development. The argument from ELC-PMC was that the community was now sensitive to the surveys being conducted in the area. As a result, the whole research enterprise could antagonise the community and thus defeat the objectives of the envisaged study.

Time constraints were also inevitable, given the fact that the researcher is a full-time student. But over and above that, some of the members of the Farm Committee commute between their respective places of work (namely, Greytown) and their domicilium. It was therefore not easy to congregate together at the same time that the researcher was available. Time was again a negative determinant in that the distance between Ophathe and Pietermaritzburg is close to 100 kilometres, which practically consumed time in travelling.

Lastly, conspicuous absence of the community's basic social amenities like clinics, properly constructed roads, a library perhaps, electricity, community-based shopping

facilities and even a community hall, was the most frustrating experience for the researcher. People expect immediate installation of these infrastructural needs which researchers, in the main, cannot readily provide. The Ophathe area is one of the most poverty-stricken communities in KwaZulu-Natal and the high expectations on development of the local community are therefore not farfetched.

(c) *Assessing the methodology of case study*

A closing word on whether or not the case study methodology achieved its objectives in this investigation is, in my opinion, very significant. This will help to critically examine if the methodological criteria as set out in Merriam's work was successfully accomplished or whether it was not as satisfactorily applied as it was intended to be.

As Merriam indicated, the essential and fundamental questions asked by the researcher were to be the 'how' and 'why' questions. This, in the view of the researcher, was achieved. There was also maximum participation by the local people which experience is a vital component of the case study methodology. There was however a difficulty in holistically interpreting the phenomenon from an entirely subjective perspective. This is because the agenda of the researcher was twofold: one - to get the historical and practical dynamics that influenced and were shaped by the political processes that brought the land and community situation to what it is at the moment; and two - to articulate together with the grassroots leadership of the

community and their constituency, ways and means of empowering them towards the direction of self-emancipation. The first objective was without doubt sufficiently dealt with. However, the second will be assessed as developments in the Ophathe Mission unfold.

It must be appreciated that, in the main, the research process was indeed collectively and collaboratively undertaken between researcher and the community. There was co-operation from the outset as the community leadership and the community at large was made to understand the intention of the research. Even though there was apprehension at the beginning related to past experiences that the Ophathe community had been subjected to in terms of promises that were left unfulfilled, rapport was established as the research process evolved. The aforementioned rapport enhanced and maximized local participation throughout the process of research.

One of the criteria put forward by Merriam is to try by all means to interpret material in context rather than to prove or disprove any given hypotheses. In the context of this study the researcher attempted successfully to unveil the interaction of vital characteristics that were directly interrelated to the community of Ophathe. This principle was applied in uncovering the power relations between the Ophathe community as a whole and the SED/ELC-PMC structures. It also brought out to the fore the power relations between the local leadership and the people on the ground.

The main problem intrinsically interconnected to the methodology was the incapacity of the researcher to know the exactitude of the number of all the informants interviewed. This was basically caused by the massive turnout at the meeting whereby all the elders of the community (men and women) gathered to make their contribution. Statistically, therefore, the researcher can enumerate the three members of the Ophathe Farm Committee, the development worker, nine individuals who are the community residents and the eighty or so members of the community who graced the meeting of the elders of the community. Altogether therefore, there were almost 93 informants who were directly or indirectly linked to the process of research.

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APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX C

DETAILS OF THE "U-PROCESS" ANALYSIS OF THE NEED FOR AN ELC-PMC FARMS' DEVELOPMENT FORUM

The question was posed as to whether there is a need for a Forum. The Rorke's Drift and the ePhangweni representatives queried their position at the meeting as they had been "suspended" and how they related to what was being discussed in the workshop. It was established that there was a need for a Forum and that even the "suspended" Farm Committee representatives were expected to participate fully in its formation.

STEP 1 : What points describe the existing situation?

- the three main players in the farms' development process were not equal, there is domination taking place;
- the Farm Committees lack the administration and management skills, as well as certain knowledge, necessary to manage the farms;
- many people are still stuck in the old ways of doing things;
- there is a tendency for some committee members to dominate;
- ELC-PMC does not respond immediately to application, which leads Committee members to believe that they are dealing with the wrong office;
- existing communication channels are not working within and between the different structures;
- a severe lack of progress in most Farm Committees;
- ELC-PMC often finds itself talking "for" the communities and that there is no community "voice";

- poor participation by some of the Farm Committee members, especially by most pastors/diocesan representatives;
- increasing "distance" between the Farm Committees and the ELC-PMC Development Section;
- lack of trust between the three role-players;
- it is both difficult and expensive for a big group of community representatives to meet;
- it is not easy to report the decisions taken at this meeting to the pastors as they tend to query most of the ELC-PMC decisions.

STEP 2 : What picture emerges from this description?

- limited progress in the development process on the farms;
- disharmony between the players with one party blaming the other because the players do not know or do not understand what the other players are doing or meant to do;
- players feeling that they are being left behind;
- destruction of natural resources through lack of information and the proper skills;
- committees and communities discriminating against women;
- problems with neighbouring White farmers, who in turn are criticizing the Farm Committees for not doing their job.

("U-process" diagram accompanied this Appendix.)