

## EDITORIAL

South Africa is in the throws of change and hopefully irrevocably so. Many generations of black people have struggled, gone to prison, bled and died for it. Many have died dreaming about that day when their humanity will be restored and affirmed, when the land their forefathers and foremothers have named as their inheritance, will be returned. Those who have inherited the dream, the poems and stories that contained this glorious message are waiting with lessening patience for realization of the great story. They are saying to themselves, this moment and this goal should not be missed!

The white ruling classes and some black political organizations, bantustan representatives and one liberation movement are engaged in an arduous process of negotiations. Other black liberation movements and political organizations are for very strong reasons, staying out of that process. The industrialists, those who benefit most from a quick settlement, are backing these negotiations in many different ways. The churches are also deeply involved, even though not through direct representation. In fact, the first session of the present negotiations forum was opened with a prayer, no many prayers.

Many issues have been placed on the agenda. These range from creation of an atmosphere that will promote the present exercise to the new constitution itself. All of these issues are very important for these negotiations to succeed. The most important, in fact we dare say, the most decisive and one that is ironically not on the agenda and that determines the state of liberation or oppression, has been left out. That issue is the return of the land. This is an issue that will determine whether the dispossessed African people will have a future of prosperity, dignity and religious satisfaction or not, hence the following articles.

These articles form the beginning of a discussion that should have taken place before we were born. It should have taken place in the Europe of the 15th century when European nations, churches and christian people decided to raid the world and violently conquer it. To come nearer home, it should have taken place in that century when the Dutch, the English, the Germans, the Belgians, the French and the Portuguese decided to raid, murder and conquer our forefathers and mothers in their own motherland, Africa. It should have taken place when the white churches in this country saw that white people had decided to make our land their own, thereby depriving us and our children of their rightful inheritance. It should have taken place when white missionaries realized that our forebears were prepared to die in defence of their land. It should have taken place when the apartheid government forced Africans off their land and without compensation, dumping them in the most arid of our land. It should have taken place when our young men and women filled the bushes and mountains of foreign countries in search for refuge. It should have taken place when they returned armed to lay their claim. It did not take place at all!

Now at last, black theologians have broken their silence. They are starting a discussion that will take black people long to complete. What is important for now is that they have started. We asked a few black theologians, a systematic theologian, a biblical scholar, an African theologian and an ethicist to kick off the

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discussion and they have agreed. They have searched the rich oral and written traditions of Africa as well as the depths of the Hebrew scriptures in their search for justice on the land question. They are also opening themselves up for useful experiences of other people of the Third World who are engaged in a similar search. They have gained, as you too will agree, from the theological, philosophical and ethical discussions that are presently going on in the ecumenical movement. They, in turn, are making their contribution to those discussions. We now table their work before you and hope that you will join the discussion.

Dr Takatso Mofokeng.