

TRIBAL FIGHTING: LAND DISPUTES

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INTRODUCTION

Tribal fighting affects many people's lives in Papua New Guinea.¹ Although there are many causes of tribal fighting, this paper will critically focus on land disputes, as a major cause of tribal fighting.

MORAL PROBLEM

Land disputes have been a major cause of tribal fighting. In many tribal groups and societies, land has become the people's main possession. People can give other things away, but not land. In Melanesia, people's allegiance is to their own land and tribe. That is why land has become their precious possession, more precious than other aspects, such as the extended family, clan, or even tribe.

On the same land, both Christians and non-Christians live together. Though they have difference in lifestyles and ideas, they share one common language, tribe, and culture. The Christian's role in tribal fighting, which results from a land dispute, is of great importance. The Christian has a moral responsibility to find lasting solutions, to

¹ A tribe can be defined as a group of people that speak a common language. Normally, a tribe consists of clans, and a clan of families. A tribal fight normally pits one tribe against another tribe, and includes the use of weapons. The term "tribal fight" can be used of fights between clans.

end tribal fighting. Our question is: “What role should the Christian play, if a tribal fight occurs?”

CONSIDER ALL FACTORS

PROTECTING TRIBE AND THE OTHER TRIBE

The protecting tribe claims to be the landowners, even though they may not be the real-ancestry landowners. They will do anything to protect their land. If it means fight, they will fight. If it means going to court, they will go to court. If it means paying compensation, they will pay compensation.

Property

Property is affected by tribal fighting. The protecting tribe may lose property, in the form of houses being burnt down, gardens destroyed, and businesses, such as, trade stores, coffee projects, pigs, and poultry destroyed. All means, effort, and time are wasted, when property and possessions are destroyed.

According to Gilbert McArthur, in *Applied Christian Ethics for Melanesia Churches*, “all property and possessions belong only to God. . . . Men’s total stewardship of life’s energies and possessions will be reviewed, both as to its essential worth towards God, and the blessing of it toward his fellowman. All property is, therefore, to be considered as sacred, for it belongs to an order, which, in the ultimate, is administered by the divine husbandman Himself”.² Therefore, no one has the right to destroy property, since it has blessed man.

Women and Children

Women and children are badly affected, since the men in the clan or tribes do all they can to protect their land. During the tribal fight, the women and children are dragged through the darkness and bushes to nearby villages for safety. Some die on the way, because of shock, no food, or no water. Some innocent children die

² Gilbert J. McArthur, *Applied Christian Ethics for Melanesian Churches*, Stanmore NSW: Stanmore Missionary Press, 1990, p 45.

at the hands of the enemy tribe. A pastor, who once took part in a tribal war in the '90s, shared that he almost struck a child from the enemy tribe, who was abandoned by her mother and father. Fortunately, women from his own tribe, who happened to pass by, saved this child.

Innocent women and children suffer and die from tribal fights. Property is destroyed, and innocent women and children suffer the consequences of the protecting tribe, in defence of their land.

Leadership

Fighting often occurs, because of bad decisions by tribal leaders. Leaders need to be mediators between their tribe and the authorities. In some tribes, leaders are often seen as dictators, who want to satisfy their own desires. Because they are leaders, people have to listen to them. Some leaders tell their people to go ahead and fight, because compensation will be paid at the end of the fighting. Others call the young people, and encourage them to fight, because the other tribe has branded them as women without strength. Tribal leaders hold the key to fighting or peace.

Compensation

Compensation is seen as a way of easing, and satisfying, both parties. Compensation becomes the main event for making peace in every tribal fight. Compensation is made, based on property and lives that were destroyed. Each tribe gives their demands, and then compensation is arranged. Both tribes lose pigs, money, and other possessions. Everyone in the tribe has to contribute, whether they like it or not.

Today, compensation is often seen as the only hope for people to gain riches, and become wealthy. According to Neville Bartle, in *Basic Themes of Melanesian Worldview*,² "Compensation has gone beyond the law of equality, and has now become a money-making racket, to gain more wealth."³ To date, the highest-paid

³ Bartle, Neville, *Basic Themes of Melanesian Worldview*, Mt Hagen PNG: Victory Books, 1991, p. 11.

compensation on record is K105,206, plus pigs, and other valuable items.⁴

Careful negotiations, including mediators from each family line, neighbouring tribal leaders, and church leaders, work toward a reasonable figure for compensation. High demands in compensation can bring frustration to those, who cannot afford it, especially when the coffee prices are low, and pigs are expensive.

NEIGHBOURING TRIBES

The neighbouring tribes, in tribal fighting, can become a refugee camp, so to speak, for the fleeing tribe. However, there are both negative and positive sides to the neighbouring tribes' providing refuge. The negative side is that, when the fleeing tribe is given accommodation or residence, they live under conditions set by the neighbouring tribe. The refugee tribe is not permitted to have their own gardens, or build their own structures. They often become labourers for the neighbouring tribe.

In many cases, neighbouring tribes become the breeding ground for tribal fighting to continue. The neighbouring tribes, on a hiring basis, often supply guns. Sometimes, men from the neighbouring tribe get involved in boosting the power of the tribe in hiding. These acts are done in secret, at times.

The positive side of the neighbouring tribes is that, many times, the neighbouring tribes, and their leaders, become the mediators to the fighting tribes. In some cases, the neighbouring tribes offer huge amounts of money and possessions to the tribe in hiding, as their contribution towards compensation. The neighbouring tribes also provide some good services, such as taking care of the wounded.

AUTHORITIES

Authorities, such as police, courts, government, mediators, and media have some effect in the tribal fights.

⁴ Taken from *Post-Courier*, July, 2000.

Police

Police are always the first people to know when tribal fighting occurs. However, because of lack of transportation, and inadequate manpower, police often seem as if they don't exist. Sometimes, police are present at the fighting zone, but can't do much, because both warring tribes use high-powered weapons. Police fear that their lives are at risk. Sometimes, police, themselves, are seen encouraging tribal fights. An incident occurred at the Kami tribal fight,⁵ about one o'clock on Friday afternoon July 6, 2001. When a police mobile squad arrived from Mt Hagen, the main highway between Kudjip and Kami was blocked off. Police gave both tribes permission to fight for three hours, until one tribe ran out of ammunition. As a result of running out of bullets, a man was killed. Police should be set up to protect the law, and the people, not to encourage people to destroy the law, or even fight.

Courts

Courts are the highest authority to make final decisions. Often, land disputes turn into a tribal fight, as a result of court decisions. In most cases, the court awards the land rights to the real owner, and the other tribe gets angry over the decision. They then take the law into their own hands, and start fighting. Courts should be fair to both tribes. The court should give warning that, if there is any fighting over the disputed land, the offenders will be sent to jail. The court often sends offenders to minimum jail terms, which is not enough to satisfy those, whose property and lives have been destroyed. Courts should have the right, or be given the right, to make fighting tribes forfeit the disputed land, and give the land to the government for other development.

Government

In Rom 13:1-6, God ordained rulers and government, so, everyone should be submissive, and obey all laws set by the rulers. Everyone, whether black or white, rich or poor, Christian or non-Christian, should respect the government. Today, there seems to be

⁵ Located in the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea.

no respect at all for the government. Illegal activities, and social evils, are on the rise. People organise, and take part in, protests to bring down the government of the day. Many have no trust in the government. Often people get frustrated, because of the government's bad decisions, which do not seem to benefit the people. Many decisions make people suffer. Many basic government services do not reach people, because of bad planning. Tribal fighting occurs when people do not see these services and development in their part of the world. Out of frustration, these people fight against each other for selfish gains.

The government is supposed to be united, yet, there seems to be infighting and instability within the government, itself. How can the government solve tribal fights, when there is instability in itself?

Peace and Land Mediators

Mediators have some effect on tribal fighting. Land mediators, or tribal elders, are the ones, who are called to mediate between the tribes, on the issues about land. Peace mediators, police officers, or court-appointed mediators, are also brought in to mediate between the tribes for peace. However, the mediation work for peace settlements, carried out by these two types of mediators is of great concern.

Peace and land mediators, appointed by the provincial authorities, such as village courts, are often incapable of handling land disputes and tribal fighting. Most appointees are leaders from different areas, or tribes, who have little or no knowledge at all on how to deal with conflicts. Some are people, who are illiterate, with no education whatsoever. Often they hear one side of the story, and make decisions. The *wantok* system also creeps into the decision-making in some cases. Money is wasted on paying people, who, really, are not fit, and capable, in mediation work. Land and peace mediators should have legal and conflict-management experience.

Media

Television, newspapers, radio, and other media sources play major roles, in terms of reporting. The way some media groups present their news, regarding tribal fights, is of great concern. Two major media sources, which we want to highlight, are television and newspapers.

Television and newspaper reporters should be careful, when dealing with tribal fighting. Photographs should be carefully analysed. When one tribe, with high-powered guns, sees itself on TV, or in the newspaper, it is like that tribe has been promoted over the other tribe. Though that may not be the media's intention, the tribes see it that way. The tribe that is not in the picture, may feel hatred, anger, jealousy, and a desire to seek revenge. Pictures, shown or displayed, may bring pride and boastfulness to those portrayed. Sometimes, this can encourage the tribes to fight on, so that they can be seen, and talked about, in the media again. The media should not show pictures. They should only report tribal fights in written form.

HOSPITAL CARE

Many hospitals, today, are dealing, seriously, with issues concerning tribal fighting. Doctors, nurses, and even hospital staff, are at risk. This is common in rural hospitals and clinics in most of the Papua New Guinea highlands. Most hospitals, in these areas, are creating ways to discourage tribal fighting. Most hospitals, today, charge higher fees (over K100) to treat any sort of injury, sustained from tribal fights.

The Kudjip Nazarene Hospital, in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea, refuses to treat tribal fight casualties. They charge higher fees, also, for minor cuts that are sustained from these tribal fights. Most tribes, near Kudjip, are now aware of the Nazarene Hospital's message to them.

Hospitals, all around the country, must do the same. They must apply some tough measures to minimise, and stop, these unnecessary fights.

LAND DEVELOPMENT (THE DISPUTED LAND)

The disputed land becomes the victim of the tribal fight. Land, once developed with housing, coffee projects, gardens, and other valuable resources, becomes undeveloped land again. In tribal fights, houses are burnt down, gardens are destroyed, and coffee, and other valuable trees, are chopped down. The disputed land then is left until it becomes bushy again.

The land, which is undeveloped and disputed, may stay undeveloped for many years, often for as long as there is friction between the tribes. This can stop the provincial government, national government, and other development authorities, from developing the province, and the nation as a whole. Tribal fighting, resulting from land disputes, hinders both the present and future generations from benefiting from their own land.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES

What principles should Christians apply, when they come across tribal fighting over land disputes? In light of these principles, what order of priorities should operate in the decision-making process?

TRADITION

In early church history, religious groups fought against each other, in defence of their faith and religion. In the world today, Christians and Muslims are in conflict, in defending their own religions. Christians take part in wars. For example, in the Gulf War, many Christians, from the allied forces, took part in fighting against the Iraqis. This was a war to defend Kuwait from Iraqi invasion. The allied nations' main concern was to protect lives and property.

In "Christianity and Tribal Fighting in Enga Province PNG", Ken Fox interviewed several people, including some missionaries, asking, "Why do Christians fight, when they know they

shouldn't?"⁶ These people responded, by saying, "Christians can fight to defend themselves and their land, it is OK."⁷ However, what has happened in tradition, may vary from today's tribal fighting. The motives behind these tribal wars are to be critically analysed, in light of the word of God.

SCRIPTURE

Scripture, as the word of God, has answers to people's moral problems, and ethical questions. Only the word of God can give that, which people cannot give. Tribal fighting has affected areas, in which the word of God speaks. The Old Testament and the New Testament contain truths and values, related to tribal fighting.

Old Testament

Creation. The word of God, in Gen 1:1-3; 14:9, tells us that God created the whole world, both the heavens and the earth. God was satisfied with all that He created, but now people are destroying what He made. According to Cole, in his article "Towards a Biblical Theology on Land and Environment", "It is God who really owns the earth (Ex 19:5). For this reason, there are responsibilities attached to the reception of the gift. If the people will acknowledge the giver, through obedience, then the land and environment will flourish, along with people."⁸

People have no right to destroy the living things that God has made. All things should exist, freely, without disruption. However, people, without respect for the master designer, destroy the natural environment and natural life of all living things. Job 38:33-34 teaches that God has set all these things in place, and He, alone, can do what He wants to do with them. Therefore, regarding land disputes that lead to tribal fighting, tribal groups should have respect for God's creation, and the natural law.

⁶ Ken Fox, "Christianity and Tribal fighting in the Enga Province", in *Catalyst* 19-2 (1989), Goroka PNG: Melanesian Institute, pp. 147-149.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁸ H. Ross Cole, "Towards a Biblical Theology on Land and Environment", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 6-2 (October, 1990), pp. 42-44.

God saw His creation was good. God made man, who outclassed the rest of creation. Man is unique, because he is made in the image of God (Gen 1:27), and he has God's breath in him (Gen 2:7). This makes man very valuable in the sight of God. McArthur, in *Applied Christian Ethics for Melanesian Churches*, says, "Man is not just another stage along the life of evolutionary development. He is of divine origin. His genesis is wonderful, and yet mysterious, and awesome; his propensities for life and immorality are of similar nature and glory."⁹

Therefore, men and women, in every tribe, have to be seen as God's likeness. Every tribe, or people, should see each other as carrying the image of God. Killing a soul senselessly, in tribal fighting, is destroying a human, made in the image of God. It is not honouring the sanctity of life that God intends. It is lessening the value of life that God created in humans.

When God created man, He made man with a conscience (Prov 20:27). Man's conscience was pure and perfect before God. However, when sin entered the world, through Adam, man's conscience was contaminated, and evil thoughts were imparted. Man's conscience was affected, (Titus 1:15-16), and so he does worthless things. Only when man's conscience is pure, will he make the right judgment to kill, or not to kill. He will know what is right and wrong. Tribal leaders should realise that their conscience tells them not to fight, and yet, they go against their own conscience, and the consciences of others, which can lead to destruction (1 Tim 1:19).

According to the creation account, men and women were not only created in the image of God, but were also created to be the steward of the remainder of God's creation. God's primary purpose was for men and women to live in peace with God, other people, and creation. Cook, in the *Moral Maze*, reports, "Nevertheless, where life is concerned, man's primary duty is to act as a steward, and to

⁹ McArthur, *Applied Christian Ethics*, p. 17.

preserve his stewardship responsibility before God.”¹⁰ In Gen 1:28, God told man to multiply, and fill the earth, not to kill and destroy.

According to God’s word, sin has affected the world and people. People are found to be sinful (Rom 3:23). This effect has led people to live sinfully, and has caused this great fall from God’s presence. Therefore, people experience hatred, jealousy, anger, lust, and greed, which lead to land disputes and tribal fighting. The effects of the fall have affected people’s ultimate fellowship with God, and other people.

Covenant and law. God has established a relationship with His people. People are presented with a covenant God, who has a binding relationship with them. This relationship is called a covenant (Gen 12:1-17; Deut 7:7-9). God has also promised to bless His people if they keep His commandments and honour him (Deut 30:1-10). Laws are also established to keep people in order, as God intended. Through the Law, God displayed His standard for people to keep and follow. The Ten Commandments, which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, reveal people’s duty to God, and other people. People are obliged to keep these laws, as God’s standard, and live them. In the case of tribal fighting, the sixth law of the Ten Commandments says, “Do not murder” (Ex 20:13). Participating, and killing people, in a tribal fighting, is breaking one important covenant law of God. People can choose to break the commands of God, or keep them and, therefore, honour him.

Wisdom literature. Tribal fighting leads to one tribe fighting the other tribe, to get the land. It often stems from jealousy toward the other tribe, and a selfish desire to get what is wrongfully theirs. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastics, and the Song of Solomon contain wisdom teaching. They contain plain, down-to-earth, practical truths for all. Prov 6:35 speaks against bribery. Prov 27:4 talks about jealousy. Prov 1:18 talks about selfishness and greed. Wisdom has to be applied to each tribe, so that they can live in righteousness, peace, and respect for each other.

¹⁰ David Cook, *The Moral Maze*, London UK: SPCK, 1983, p. 124.

Prophets. Prophets were men, appointed by God, to be special messengers to the people. The prophet's aim was to restore true morality that was taught by God in the Laws and covenant. Prophets spoke of God's righteousness and character, which was what God intended for all people to know and have. Their message remains the same today. The prophet's message for God's righteousness and holiness is for all tribal people. Unrighteousness leads to disputes that result in tribal fights. Lev 20:26 and 1 Peter 1:16 say that God requires holiness, because He is holy. People from each tribe and clan must live holy lives. Through holiness, they can defeat the dark and evil desires of the devil. The prophets spoke against social injustices, such as, adultery, oppression, bribery, and arrogance towards others. The prophets foretold of the time when God's laws would be written on the hearts of the people, thus making them holy in His eyes. With the coming of Christ, this new law, and righteousness, is available to all who call on God, obey Him, and thus live righteously and peacefully with his fellowman.

New Testament

Redemption. If creation is the starting point in the Old Testament ethics, redemption is in the centre of New Testament ethical teaching. God, who revealed Himself in creation, law, and the prophets, has now revealed Himself through Jesus Christ. All people can be redeemed (Eph 1:7), and find forgiveness (Col 1:14). Through Jesus, people find peace, and the walls of hostilities are broken down (Eph 2:14). Through Him, we become one, and reconciled to Him (Eph 2:15-16). Jesus' redemption shows people that He is the model of ethical living. He showed, through His redemption, that people should no longer feel hostile towards each other, but should be reconciled to one other, with love as the key. Each tribe should see each other as fellow citizens, and not enemies. They should have no walls between them.

Kingdom ethics. The coming of Jesus Christ brought new teaching, which had been pictured before in creation, the law, and the rest of the Old Testament. There are a number of ways, in which Jesus, as

God incarnate, reveals ethical living. Cook explains, “The previous revelation of morality has become clear, as they are personified in the God, who becomes human.”¹¹ Jesus fulfilled the law, and He became the law, as well. John 15:12 says, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” Kingdom ethics is centred on love. Love becomes the basis of the kingdom today. The tribes must love their neighbours, as they love themselves. The greatest commandment God gave is to “Love one another.” Whether these tribes are Christians, or not, different in personalities, or culture, they ought to love each other.

Paul's ethics. Paul uses the laws, as a means to arrive at how God and Christ require, and desire, man to live. That life is a life of love. 1 Cor 13:4 says love is patient and kind, love is not boastful or jealous, love is not arrogant or rude, love does not insist on its own way, love is not irritable or resentful. This fulfils the law (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8). Impatience, arrogance, rudeness, jealousy, insisting on one's own way, and resentment, are what cause tribal fighting and land disputes.

Paul's ethical emphasis is on a community morality, in which he cares for the whole person, and would prevent fighting. Paul admires those who imitate, not just hear, what he teaches; people were instructed to imitate the Master, the Teacher, Himself. Paul clearly lays down both the specifics of moral teaching, and also a means of solving ethical moral problems. In Eph 5:22-23; 6, Paul shows how husbands, wives, children, masters, and slaves should live together. Paul's ethical teaching must be applied over land-dispute matters. Each tribe, clan, and individual must submit to each other, with respect and reverence.

Pastoral epistles. There are many problems, such as, corruption, dishonesty, and social injustices, which occurred in the days of the early church. The epistles were written to address issues that were affecting the church. Tribal fighting over land disputes is one of the common problems faced by the church today. Many churches

¹¹ Ibid., p. 55.

are built on tribal land. When tribal fighting occurs, often the church is destroyed. The pastoral epistles should be taken seriously, by the church and the people, as important advice. Titus 3:1-2 says, “man should do good to others, not to slander”. Each tribe should consider, and show true humility, and be peaceful toward other tribes. 2 Tim 2:23 says, “have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies, which leads to trouble”. In most cases, tribal fighting starts with senseless quarrels. Therefore, there needs to be control over unnecessary disputes in the community, by the church, clan, and the tribal leaders.

Church and Holy Spirit

The church plays an important role in every area of a person’s life, and in creation. The church has to have answers to conflicts, and be able to maintain its purpose to the people, and God’s creation, as a whole. However, churches seem to be so quiet nowadays, while evil social activities are increasing, and Satan is taking advantage of people’s weakness. The church must be careful not to take sides in tribal fighting. The church, and its followers, must treat the tribes as equal, in services provided, no matter who is on the wrong side. Some church properties are destroyed, or damaged, in tribal fights, when Christians are seen to be taking sides, or are included in the fight. In many cases, the enemy tribe destroys the church building, and pastor’s home, because of this fact.

The church should be seen as the body of Christ. The church should be vocal in speaking against land dispute problems, and should teach the people to give their allegiance to Christ, and not to the tribe, or the land. The church should emphatically teach that the church is the “body of Christ”, and not a “tribal church”.

The Holy Spirit wants to help the church, and the people, to know what God’s will is, and who He is. The Spirit comes, in order to bring blessing and truth to those who are lost. He comes to bring peace, and the fullness of Christ, to those who cause fights over land disputes. He comes to bring freedom to those, who live under the bondage of sin and Satan. The Holy Spirit produces fruit of

righteousness for all to live in the likeness of God (Gal 5:22-23). He produces fruit of peace, for all men to live peacefully in oneness, and fruit of love for all to love one another. Cook instructs, "The Christian virtues of compassion and mercy are to be shown by the power of the Holy Spirit."¹² The Holy Spirit leads us to exalt Christ, not the tribe or the clan. He leads us to put our allegiance and faith in Christ, and not the tribe. If only Christians, and the church, would allow the Holy Spirit to lead, He would lead people to victory, and not defeat. He is willing, and ready, to give confidence and power (Acts 1:8) to whomever is ready to stand for Jesus, in this troubled world. He will give victory and protection to Christians not involved in fighting. The Lord God has already written the law of right and wrong, through His Spirit (Rom 5:5).

Prayer is also vital in discipleship. The church should pray with each tribe often. Only through prayer will God help to bring the fight to an end, or prevent it from happening. The church should pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:16-18).

The Christian must be prepared to suffer any circumstances, not for the good of the tribe, but for Christ's sake. The Christian must be willing to use his time, family, money, food, and other things, for the sake of peace. His life of compassion is for the people, who are affected, such as, women, children, and the wounded (Luke 9:23; Mark 8:35).

AIMS, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

One has to know what aims, goals, and objectives are present, in trying to solve land disputes that lead to tribal fighting. The church should know what roles to play, and how to deal with these situations.

TO TEACH A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

The nearby churches should have goals to solve the conflict, and be mediators. The church should work together to stop tribal fighting,

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 129.

through evangelism and discipleship, and to reach out, in Christian response, to the situations that are confronting the nation, the community, and the lives of people. The church should affect the lives of the tribe, by sending Christians into each tribe and clan, to reach each person in personal evangelism. The great commission should be the ultimate goal for the Christian to reach the tribal people.

In addition, Christians, working with people, in terms of discipleship, are seen as the most effective way of making a big difference in people's lives. Discipleship is an important tool for Christians to use to help these tribal people be strong and effective in the Lord. Christians should disciple the tribe to put their allegiance in God, and not in the tribe. Often people look to their tribe, and depend on the leaders, without knowledge that their tribal leaders will fail them one day. When their tribe is defeated in tribal fighting, people become hopeless and hurt. Putting one's allegiance in Christ will mean people will not be defeated, but will find victory in life. For Christ will never fail man. According to Josh 1:5; Is 42:16; Deut 31:6; Heb 13:5, God has promised that He will never forsake the tribal people, nor leave them alone.

TO KEEP PEACE

The Christian must teach the tribe to deny self. They need to know that Christianity means self-denial (Luke 9:23), if they really want to go to heaven. The denying of self will help the tribe avoid pride, which may cause jealousy, selfishness, and greed, which results in tribal fighting. Each person in the tribe needs to sacrifice self, in order that God can bless him or her abundantly.

The tribe also needs to learn how to trust in God. Often people do not trust in God, so that is why they do not see the hand of God in their lives. Tribal people must trust in God, and not in their tribe, clan, or leaders (Ps 118:8, 9). Jesus said to trust in God, and trust also in Him (John 14:1; Ps 37:5). Tribal people must trust the Lord with all their hearts. They need to trust God for salvation (Is 25:9), for deliverance (Dan 6:23), for good deeds (Titus 3:8), and for

happiness and peace (Rom 15:13). Heb 12:14 says, “make every effort to live in peace with all men”. The tribe’s trust in God will help them be the people that God will bless, and keep from tribal fighting and land disputes.

OTHER PEOPLE’S VIEWPOINT

Others have to be considered, when one is trying to bring solutions to tribal fights.

TRIBE ONE AND TRIBE TWO

In trying to find lasting and meaningful solutions in problem-solving, there has to be fairness in receiving information. Both tribes have to be consulted, even though only one may be at fault. The important people to consult should be the ringleaders, or “big man”, because they know exactly what to say about their tribe, and the cause of the problem. Christians from each tribe should also be consulted. They may be able to help convince the tribal leaders to try means other than fighting.

NEIGHBOURING TRIBES

Neighbouring tribes would be good information sources as well. These neighbouring tribes would know who is right and who is wrong, concerning the tribal fighting groups. In many cases, these neighbouring tribes are related to those, who are fighting, yet, they are not involved. The church, and other negotiation teams, must work together, within these neighbouring tribes, to bring lasting solutions. The church should then lead in meditation work.

ALTERNATIVES, POSSIBILITIES, AND CHOICES

We have seen many possible effects, when tribal fights occur. It affects the relationship of the people: socially, economically, physically, and mentally. Tribal fighting does so much damage to people’s lives and property. It is one of the worst disasters that man can cause to destroy the beautiful creation of God. This includes the destruction of man, made in His moral image, as well as the environment. There are many causes of tribal fighting;

however, this particular paper has looked at land disputes, as a major source. Therefore, one can use some possible alternatives when land disputes occur:

1. The government, court, and land authorities could have the authority to move one of the fighting tribes to resettle on other unused land, so that the disputed land can be developed, and people can live freely.
2. Both tribes could sell the disputed land, and share the money equally among themselves.
3. Both tribes could pay compensation to each other for peace, according to damage, and loss of property and lives.
4. The disputed land could be forfeited to the provincial and national authorities (state) for other developments, such as, schools, playing fields, hospitals, or other services. This would help tribes and people not to fight, or else they may lose their land.
5. The disputed land could be divided, if there were no evidence of who owns the land.
6. Both tribes could pay fines to the state for damage to the environment, hindering development, and loss of lives. Often state lease-lands are among the disputed lands, which are claimed by traditional landowners.

When a church buys land, it needs to make sure it is properly authorised, and approved land. Tribal leaders, landowners, mediators, and the court must sign appropriate documents. This will keep the church from being a victim of tribal fighting over land disputes.

THE MORAL DECISION: CONCLUSION

It is not easy to convince people, but the proper moral decision comes when people take others' views more seriously. This means listening to other peoples' views, and suggesting possible suitable

solutions to land disputes. People are seeking answers for land disputes, to prevent them from becoming tribal fights. This paper is not the answer to this situation, but, rather, a road map, to show possible suggestions to help deal with this issue of tribal fighting, and land disputes. This will help the church, and the people concerned.

Tribes, clans, and the people, should know what the Bible says about fighting and disputes. People can learn, from this model of decision-making, that God is against tribal fighting, land disputes, killing, and destruction of His creation. The word of God is the ultimate source for answers to this moral issue. We pray that God, who is rich in mercy, may grant understanding and wisdom from above, through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that each tribe, clan, people, and the church make the right moral decision.

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