

THE CHURCH
AND
THE LANDLESS
POOR

Lobby and Liberate

By C Stephens

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1. Introduction

This book is inter-related to two other booklets that may also be of interest to the reader:

- a) Let Justice Roll like a River – is an exhortation for churches to exhort! It starts by mapping out who “evangelicals” are, largely because that terrain is my own natural habitat, my terra firma. I sense they need this exhortation most, because to the mainline churches and Catholics, this is but “preaching to the converted”. It reviews a lot of Justice issues that have been tackled in the past, moving up to the here and now.
- b) Orania and Azania – does some scenario-building about what can happen if we fail to reconcile the diverse racial and economic segments of South African society. This is a cautionary tale. But from that negative side, it may reinforce our case that Land Reform is not only inevitable – it is a moral imperative.

This book comes straight to the point – what principles are there in “the Year of Jubilee” that can be applied in the present day? Jubilee was the Old Testament’s solution to Land Reform. If God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, then there must be some relevant principles embedded in that old approach?

2. Land Reform

I have already stated my assumption that Land Reform is an imperative in South Africa. It is coming, whether we like it or not. But no one is sure exactly how it will play out, because it is controversial and divisive.

Before I outline in chapter 3 a role that the church could converge on in this Great Debate, I wish to merely highlight some key reference points, from ancient times to the present.

2.1 Jubilee principles

I am not trying to turn the clock back. South Africa in the 21st century cannot suddenly become a Theocracy like ancient Israel. But in the Old Testament Poor Laws, there is a motherlode of wisdom. Here is a summary of its relevance, as I see it:

- a) Inequality can be tolerated to some extent. But it becomes a moral / social justice issue when its proportions become “classes”.
- b) We are not all gifted to be rich, or famous, or “winners”. In fact, these are relative terms that would be meaningless if everyone was the same. But we are all called to contribute – to be productive. Food Security does concern God because He is our provider.

- c) So use the land or lose it. Land that is unproductive should be redeemed *on a regular, on-going basis*. Land can be confiscated from productive rich people in the Year of Jubilee AND redeemed from lazy unproductive people at any time between
- d) Land belongs to God. Not to the tribe or State. Not to private owners.
- e) Humans are stewards or regents of land and natural resources. These should not be wasted. There is a huge difference between good management and mere exploitation.
- f) Inequality is an issue in its own right. Linking it to race can create more heat than light. (Just as “monopoly capital” is a global issue; so leave “white” out of it.)
- g) The Year of Jubilee is event-based not policy-based. It is neither socialist nor capitalist; it can coexist with both or either, just as it was even practiced under feudalism. But it IS “radical”.
- h) Every 49 years means only once in a lifetime. So it is not a manifesto.
- i) On this very occasional basis, there must be a “planned revolution” to level the playing field. Those that were routinely removed because of poor productivity, farm failure, or laziness should be able to press the Re-start button. Because we are all citizens, and there should be equal opportunity
- j) There is a convergence of Judaism, Christianity and Islam on the Old Testament Poor Laws, where Jubilee emerged from. There is also an “axis” of all the religions that emerged in the “Axial Age”. Justice, mercy and compassion go together, like salt, pepper and cooking oil. All recipes call for them all.
- k) This convergence is on a Solution, not just on the problem analysis. Leaving it at “the poor will always be with you” is fatalistic. Jubilee assures that there is always hope on the horizon.
- l) Between these “planned revolutions” there should be plenty of space for the agile to get ahead as well as coping mechanisms for failure and some tolerance of inequality. But when the inequality reaches unacceptable proportions – then sound the trumpet again and level the playing field again
- m) The essence is a recognition that all South African citizens are eligible for health and comfort – not just some. Not just a class. Not just one race. Not just one gender. So once-in-a-lifetime we have to level the playing field – radically.
- n) Selective or arbitrary “land invasions” will not solve the problem. Jubilee is a wrap-around solution that no one can escape or plunder from

One pastor said to me recently. “Oh I know all about the Year of Jubilee, but it would be totally impractical in South Africa”. He was right. I could also add that 29 years on Robben Island was impractical – so was exile. Holding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was impractical too. Even elections can be impractical – decision-making in dictatorships is far more streamlined. Come to think of it, forgiving debt IS totally impractical, and gaining forgiveness of sins was unspeakably

impractical – God had to become man and the giver of Life had to surrender himself unto death. How practical was that?! It was as inconvenient and radical as you can get. But He did it. Because He is our Father and now our Brother and because we are one family.

2.2 Inevitable Greek influence

In about 580 BC, Athens faced a similar problem. At that time, from Greece all the way across Mesopotamia and India to China there were great civilizations. But they were ALL ruled by despots. Concurrent to this golden age of Greece, where *Socrates* emerged as the icon, were contemporaries like *Isaiah* in Mesopotamia, *the Buddha* in India and *Confucius* in China. It is called the Axial Age.

But only one person is on record to have been so Just that he declined to become the despot, even when it was offered to him by the citizenry. Solon was a judge who was so admired by citizens for being Just, that they invited him to take over the mantle of Despot, to rule over them. The Athenians asked him to take over, instead of the oligarchs who were unable to correct the prevailing problems, and he declined.

Rather, he decided to design and try a new system by which *the people rule*. Not despots, not oligarchs, not the military. But the *majority*.

To make a long story short, Solon designed this new system and got Athens to agree not to change it for 10 years. Then he went abroad travelling (to Egypt, Cyprus, and other Greek city-states). This was the birth of *Democracy*. It did not go well, I have to admit. (Nor is ours going well.) It did not last long. Soon it was corrupted. But he started a fire that no one has ever extinguished, with something he called a *Constitution*. A more recent one famously begins: “We the people...” You can’t lock up an idea, even one that is (in the words of Winston Churchill) “the worst imaginable form of government – except for all the others.”

But let me go deeper to the problems that Athens was facing when it turned to a Wise Judge for leadership. Economically, Athens was plagued with something called Debt. There were rich and poor, and in those days you could not mortgage your land, because it belonged perpetually to the clans. So if individuals suffered business losses and fell into personal debt they could only indenture their children, then their wives, then themselves. Yes, slavery. Not whites enslaving blacks. Greeks enslaving other Greeks. Older people enslaving youth. Men enslaving women. But the rich insisted that this was the only way to protect their business interests. This was a Debt and Mortgage crisis – in about 600 BC!

Solon decided that the only Just way forward was to erase all Debt and to outlaw Slavery. To proclaim freedom to the captives. This was a kind of Jubilee, but in a Greek city-state.

He reckoned that no one despot, no matter how powerful, could stand against the rage of the private sector if they undertook the Economic and Structural reforms alone. But if the majority ruled, the Moral high ground could be held – as long as no one tampered with this new system for a decade while the dust settled and it began functioning.

We need a Solon in South Africa today. The economics have hardened, too much wealth is concentrated in the possessions of too few. Our Inequality is akin to the slavery of Athens, and not

just along the fault lines of colour, because there are wealthy blacks in the Middle Class, numbering about as many as the whole white population. And because about 15 percent of whites are now among the poor. Even though most of the poor by far are black. *So this is not about Race, as much as it is about Morality or Social Justice.*

Democracy literally means people-power. Here is a structural flaw - just like wealth has become too concentrated, so has power. Power also needs to be re-distributed. Into other parties and into coalitions. You don't have to be as wise as Solon to figure that out! Even in the world's leading Democracy, oligarchy has been creeping in with families like Bush and Clinton in an Establishment where money talks louder than morality. The jury is still out on whether Democracy ended with Trump, or if he is the Solon who can "drain the swamp" and save it from ending? Likewise in the UK – is Brexit the end of an era of Britain's influence, or the beginning of something even greater?

It is significant to me that slavery became a problem in ancient Athens because of its land policy. Land belonged to the Greek *clans*, so if you yourself fell into Debt you could not sell "your" land. Instead, you indentured your children, or your wife, or yourself...

2.3 Who owns the Land?

The Land question is also primordial in South Africa, deeper than Inequality, Unemployment, Poverty or Debt.

I believe in God, like most South Africans do. I think the Bible still has a lot to offer the citizens of this country – both white and black. Here is a glimpse of the way it worked in the Early Church:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2: 42 – 47)

And by the way, Christian tradition is no stranger to radical thoughts... like:

- *Tertullian*: "Let us abandon luxury, we will not regret it."
- *St Basil the Great*: "The coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the person who needs it"
- *St. Ambrose*: "You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich."
- *St. Gregory the Great*: "When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice."

- *St. Gregory the Great*: “The Old Law did not punish the desire to hold on to wealth; it punished theft. But now the rich man is not condemned for taking the property of others; rather, he is condemned for not giving his property away.”
- *St. John Chrysostom*: “Feeding the hungry is a greater work than raising the dead.”
- *St. Clement*: “The Lord ate from a common bowl, and asked his disciples to sit on the grass. He washed their feet with a towel wrapped around his waist - He, who is the Lord of the universe! He drank water from a jar of earthenware, with the Samaritan woman. Christ made use his aim, not extravagance.”

In a related booklet called Let Justice Roll On like a River, I delineate some different church tendencies and structures. Some are more closely aligned with the state, and others are more distanced. But I think there would be general convergence on the notion that ultimately, land belongs to God. Some churches have a stronger sense that we are Regents and therefore have to administer civil affairs as well as church affairs. Others might tend to leave that to government, and keep their distance from it.

The JUBILEE LAND BANK concept should interest “all of the above” tendencies. It is non-state, but at the same time instituted to help the state intervene (a bit less radically) on behalf of the poor.

2.4 Adam Smith versus Karl Marx

In 1776, in Scotland, Adam Smith published his book The Wealth of Nations.

In 1867, in Germany, Karl Marx published his book, Das Kapital.

These two books have pretty much defined the alternatives of capitalism and socialism that have prevailed ever since – globally.

- Even though the USA has been very capitalist, it has also had some “socialist moments” like the New Deal during the Great Depression.
- Canada has been somewhat more socialist, the origins of that being in Saskatchewan under Tommy Douglas, who was re-elected five times as provincial premier. His party has formed governments in several provinces, but never yet at the federal level. This is in part because other parties adopted his popular policies and this is why Canada, for example, offers “medicare” to all citizens – which wasn’t an American reality until Obama tried to introduce it in the USA. Only to have it dismantled by Trump.
- In France, the 2017 election run-off were as usual between a candidate who is from the so-called “far right” and one who is “centrist”. Electing a “populist” candidate might have caused France to go the route of Brexit and leave the European Union. But the majority chose to stick it out in the EU and its common currency.
- Brexit in the UK is an example of how this pendulum can swing back and forth. Voters are inclining more to the “laissez faire” advice of Adam Smith than to the centralizing tendency of Karl Marx. Both views continue to be influential. But to some extent this constant electioneering means that fundamental problems like unemployment and poverty get

looked at as permanent “issues” not as “milestones” that can be passed and left behind. In fact, unemployment and poverty are BOTH issues and milestones. But unless there is a milestone-mechanism to level the playing field every so often, we perpetuate them.

- At the end of the Cold War – forty years after World War II ended – the so-called Communist Bloc disappeared. Countries like Russia and China have adopted mixed economies. They are thriving as never before and their currencies are on the rise as “forex”. But they have retained at least at the deepest level of values (so they say) an ideal that cherishes Equality and wants to eradicate poverty. Ironically, they tend to be economically capitalist while politically repressive. But then capitalism and socialism are economic terms, whereas democracy and dictatorship are political terms.

Adam Smith wrote a “descriptive” book trying to understand and explain the ways things worked. Marx wrote more of a “prescriptive” book trying to find the Way Forward. Socialism certainly gave Capitalism a run for its money, particularly during the Cold War (following WWII). Thanks to historian Yuval Noah Harari from his brilliant book Sapiens for the following two summaries. (The bold print is mine):

On Capitalism

“In a completely free market, unsupervised by kings or priests, avaricious capitalists can establish minorities or collude against their workforces. If there is a single corporation controlling all the shoe factories in a country, or if all factory owners conspire to reduce wages simultaneously, then the labourers are no longer able to protect themselves by switching jobs.

“Even worse, greedy bosses might curtail the worker’s freedom of movement through debt peonage or slavery. At the end of the Middle Ages, slavery was almost unknown in Christian Europe. During the early modern period, the rise of European capitalism went hand in hand with the rise of the Atlantic slave trade. Unrestrained market forces, rather than tyrannical kings or racist ideologues, were responsible for this calamity.

On Socialism

“Even though liberal humanism sanctifies humans, it does not deny the existence of God, and is, in fact, founded on monotheist beliefs. The liberal belief in the free and sacred nature of each individual is a direct legacy of the traditional Christian belief in free and eternal individual souls. Without recourse to eternal souls and a Creator God, it becomes embarrassingly difficult for liberals to explain what is so special about individual Sapiens.

*“Another important sect is socialist humanism. Socialists believe that ‘humanity’ is collective rather than individualistic. They hold as sacred not the inner voice of each individual, but the species Homo sapiens as a whole. Whereas liberal humanism seeks as much freedom as possible for individual humans, **socialist humanism seeks equality between all humans. According to socialists, inequality is the worst blasphemy against the sanctity of humanity, because it privileges peripheral qualities of humans over their universal essence.** For example, when the rich are privileged over the poor, it means that we value money more than the universal essence of all humans, which is the same for rich and poor alike.*

“Like liberal humanism, socialist humanism is built on monotheist foundations. The idea that all humans are equal is a revamped version of the monotheist conviction that all souls are equal before God.

We need to recognize that the notion of “private property” is a doctrine of capitalism. As a system, this was launched by Adam Smith in 1776 – only 250 years ago! OK, his book was *descriptive* so the practices that he analyzed already existed. But no one espoused them *as a system or as a platform* before he wrote The Wealth of Nations.

The whites who settled in South Africa have mostly arrived in the 250-year period since Adam Smith. Their thinking and deeper beliefs are largely defined by Adam Smith, who was from Scotland, another Calvinist setting – like Holland where the Boers came from. The French Reformer John Calvin pre-dated Adam Smith. That was about 500 years ago.

Calvanists got very involved in community affairs and public governance, they did not subscribe to the separation of church and state. Similarly, Karl Marx would emerge from Germany where Luther was the predominant church Reformer. Church and state were not distanced there either, like they were in the USA. Perhaps this explains why Marxism is basically framed as a secular religion? It has its own diagnosis of the human condition, a Saviour, and even an eschatology. It says there is no God and that religion is an opiate of the people, but then it supplants religion with a secular belief system - one that is largely economic with some social aspects as well.

Personally, as a believer in God, I cannot subscribe to Marxist beliefs.

But to be honest, the capitalist view of private property is at odds with the biblical view and the view of the church fathers that evolved from scripture, as well. Both are at odds with the Marxist view, which is that land belongs to the State. Whereas capitalists say that it belongs to whoever bought it and owns the registered title deed. The Bible says that the land belongs to God, and that those who occupy it are His tenants.

I recognize that one of the Ten Commandments – “Thou shalt not steal” – can be read as condoning private property.

Even die-hard capitalists will agree that a Landlord (in this case God) has the right to give notice to a tenant to vacate His property, if he has other purposes and plans for it.

Some people like Fanon try to wrap up Marxism in ethnic African contextualization. It still comes up short. Some of us have lived long enough to have worked in Communist countries. Frankly, they were failed states. As a system, Communism never improved the world much, on balance. But Capitalism is turning out to be another huge disappointment.

2.5 Forty acres and a mule

From Moses who was born and raised in Africa... to Solon of Athens... to the early church in the Levant... to the Protestant Reformers in northern Europe... to Adam Smith a famous Scot and Karl Marx a famous German... we find many divergent views. A glance at the USA is also instructive:

Before and during the American Civil War, a model emerged that served as a kind of vision of the post-war future. After that war ended, many freedmen believed they had a moral right to own the land they had long worked as slaves. They widely expected to legally claim 40 acres (16 ha) of land (a quarter-quarter section) and a mule after the end of the war.

Some land redistribution occurred under military jurisdiction during the war and for a brief period thereafter. But, federal and state policy during the Reconstruction era emphasized wage labour, not land ownership, for African Americans. Almost all land allocated during the war was restored to its antebellum owners.

Most blacks acquired land through private transactions, with ownership peaking at 15,000,000 acres (6,100,000 ha) in 1910. Most of that land was in 4 states - Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. This figure has since declined to 5,500,000 acres in 1980 and to 2,000,000 acres in 1997. Most of this land is not the area held by Black families in 1910; beyond the "Black Belt", it is located in Texas, Oklahoma, and California. The total number of Black farmers has decreased from 925,708 in 1920 to 18,000 in 1997; the number of White farmers has also decreased, but much more slowly.

Black American land ownership has diminished more than that of any other ethnic group, while White land ownership has increased. Black families who inherit land across generations without obtaining an explicit title (often resulting in tenancy in common by multiple descendants) may have difficulty gaining government benefits and risk losing their land completely. Outright fraud and lynchings have also been used to strip Black people of their land. Government policies – especially in the USDA - have not been conducive on the whole to keeping African Americans on the land.

So the phrase "40 acres and a mule" has come to symbolize the broken promise that Reconstruction policies would offer economic justice for African Americans. It even took a decade or so, after the American Civil War, for the freedmen to become citizens.

246 years of Slavery ended, and 99 years of Segregation began. I lament the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, just after the Civil War ended (by a white supremacist). Something called "convict leasing" soon took over – slavery by another name. Blacks were arrested for relatively minor misdemeanours, then given harsh jail sentences. During their incarceration, they were leased out to farms, factories and government as cheap labour.

This ultimately caused them to flee the South and migrate to the North or West. And to leave the rural areas to migrate to the cities. (Leaving the land primarily for whites to farm.) But that is another chapter in the history of Injustice - let us return to South Africa.

2.6 Broken Promises

Speaking of disappointments... there has been a litany of setbacks in South Africa.

- The Natives Land Act of 1913 was passed to allocate only about 7% of arable land to Africans and leave the more fertile land for whites. This law incorporated territorial segregation into legislation for the first time since Union in 1910.

- The Bantustans were created in April 1950, when the Apartheid government passed the Group Areas Act. This law enforced the segregation of the different races to specific areas within the urban locale. It also restricted ownership and the occupation of land to a specific statutory group.
- There is not much difference when you look at a map between the British version of 1913 and the Afrikaner version of 1950.
- According to a 2017 government audit, 72 percent of the nation's private farmland is owned by white people, who make up 9 percent of the population. The NGO Afriforum claims that 24% of South African land is owned by the state and 35% is owned by black people. Obviously these statistics cannot be reconciled. Reliable data is not available.
- Tribal trusts have been entrenched by the Constitution which preserves both traditional and human rights. The Ngonyama Trust managed by the Zulu royal family is very controversial. Some see it as a genetic throwback to apartheid, others as a place where traditional culture can be respected within the broader nation.
- No official Ba Baroa language leaves them nowhere, with no space. Their Chief has therefore declared unilaterally that he owns Western Cape province, on behalf of his people. Maps of the Natives Land Act and the Group Areas Act not only look similar - neither mentions the Khoi-San. The “homelands” are along the northern border and the east coast, as the Bantus migrated down from the north-east. The west and centre of the country were reserved totally for the settlers. That large space was certainly not “empty” of first nations when the whites arrived. It was where the Ba Baroa receded to, south of the deserts.
- Some claim that the Bantu migrations coming down from the north stole the lands of the Ba Baroa first, only to have them stolen by the whites coming up from the port cities between Capetown and Durban. This of course takes a lot of force out of the contention by blacks that the whites “stole” the land from them! The big losers are the Khoi and the San.

Many citizens, possibly a majority, are disappointed by the progress during first 25 years of Democracy. Some black people have begun to prosper - an elite, a middle class – but the majority of people have not noticed much improvement.

High unemployment rates are aggravating their sense of disappointment. The economy in the USA after its Civil War was generally robust and thus the emphasis there was on wage labour, not land redistribution. But that isn't true of South Africa, where economic growth had been steady but slow. Worse yet, while the population has been growing steadily, the economy continues to shed jobs. There are more people than ever, and fewer jobs now than there were 25 years ago.

The phrase “40 acres and a mule” is not known in South Africa. But the aspirations of many people are shifting towards something similar – to fair access to land, tools, inputs... and thus to farm credit. There is a slow awakening that industrial growth is not creating enough “jobs” in the formal sector of the economy. And that the jobs that remain are already filled with older people who have better education and more experience.

Youth entering the work force need to look more at self-employment. In the context of affirmative action, another group also has dwindling choices (not even emigration) other than self-employment; these are the “pale males”.

I once heard the then-CEO of our Services SETA (Ivor Blumenthal) describe the difference in work place ethos between China and South Africa. He said that in China, if a road is needed to connect two towns, they announce this on the radio indicating the day that work will start. On that day, 10,000 people rock up, each one bringing a shovel or wheelbarrow. Three months later, there is a road. Whereas if government announces in South Africa that two towns will be connected by a new road, the first thing people ask is: “Who has the bulldozer?”

In an interview with Dali Tambo, I once noted Robert Mugabe commenting on the difference between Zimbabweans, who are largely rural and use to labour-intensive approaches, and South Africans, who think at higher levels of technology. But it is slowly dawning on more and more of us that working the land will be better than sitting idle in a township, unemployed.

The final section of this chapter (2.11) looks at how practicable this is. For the challenges of a farming career should not be understated.

2.7 Is anyone right?

In the last analysis, we need to agree on a system *that works for us*. With that in mind, let us scope the southern African region in the here and now...

In one neighbouring country – Mozambique - all land is owned by the State. You can use the land but you can't own it. In essence, if you don't use it and let it become unproductive, then the State can give some else permission to enter and use it. But the same applies to them – the common purpose is to make unproductive land productive. This grows the economy of that farm, its village, the district, province and nation – as products flow from the farm gate to markets and consumers.

The focus here is not on race or on history but on justice and impartiality. NO ONE is allowed to let good farmland go to waste, for that is against the common good.

Obviously South Africa's economy is very different from Mozambique's. That said, Mozambique's economy has been growing - in spurts - in recent decades.

The spectre of land invasions in Zimbabwe will trouble many readers, but there are significant differences. First of all, that was carried out under the auspices of the ruling party, which basically deployed ex-combatants to confiscate land from white farmers. The EFF is has 44 MPs sitting in Parliament, supported largely by the youth vote, and it is encouraging idle youth to occupy unused land *in order to become productive*. The morality of this is entirely different, as noted in the quotes from church fathers cited above.

So maybe the retort that land invasion will scare away investors is more fear-mongering than fact-finding?

One important lesson from Zimbabwe is not to leave land reform too late. It started there in 1980 after white minority rule was replaced by one-person-one-vote Democracy. It also started with a

“willing buyer, willing seller” mechanism. Its target of resettling 162 000 families in the first 5 years was not reached – only 50 000 families were resettled in that period. Most of the land remained in the hands of 5 000 white farmers.

Opposition parties began to challenge the government and thus, to consolidate its grip on power, it drove the land occupations, evictions, and related violence. This caused a major economic slump, featuring an Exodus of human talent that diminished the prospects for youth. There has been slow resurgence of agricultural production in some years, but we should learn from Zimbabwe’s mistakes and not repeat them. The point is that land reform is inevitable, so transformation must be managed in a way that will grow South Africa’s economy, not shrink it.

In Botswana, some mines have been nationalized on a selective basis. This policy has worked well for that country’s economy, and the EFF’s policy is likewise - not to nationalize all mines, but some. The key theme is one and the same - *to make unproductive resources productive*. Human capital is mission-critical in both agriculture and mining, and there is no shortage of that. The key is how to line that up with the other kinds of capital needed to grow the economy.

From these neighbouring countries, there are valuable lessons to learn. But one thing bothers me. There does not seem to be an “optimal dream” that youth are aspiring for. The term “land invasion” sounds more military and less economic. Couldn’t we find a positive note to champion as a Vision? One that might encourage the incredibly productive (but highly mechanized) Boers to buy into the Year of Jubilee approach? The emphasis being rather on adopting something like a “low-inputs-low-outputs” strategy or just a more labour-intensive kind of farming? These are different, but have proven to be productive in other parts of the world. The key of Jubilee is to restore and recover productivity, not to just invade productive land and convert it into unproductive financial failure. That will help no one, and if anything, just reinforce the stereotypes that are already too hardened.

2.8 Time to move on from Restitution-based Land Claims

Priority has been given since 1994 to land claims of those still living, whose property had been confiscated. They could claim it back, though this could take a lot of time. A distinction was made between the land and the infrastructure built on it. Those in possession of the land could then be compensated for their investments, before the land was returned to its original owner.

But the next hurdle is “generic” Land Reform. In other words, re-sizing and re-fitting in order to get means of production into the hands of the unemployed, and to reduce Disparity in general. For according to the Gini Coefficient, the gap between the haves and the have-nots in South Africa is far wider than in most countries. And this is not only racial, it is generational as well.

We face extreme Inequality among a populace that for the most part believes in God. Disparity does exist in many other countries, although it might be hard to match our “monotheistic conviction” in those places. So this is leading South Africa to a lot of soul-searching and strategizing.

After coming to power in 1994, the ANC set the goal of re-distributing 30 percent of farmland by the end of 2014. It reckoned that there were 82 million hectares in white hands so that benchmark was 24.5 million hectares.

But in the first 20 years of Democracy, only 4.2 million hectares (more than 4800 farms) were transferred to black ownership. That's only 5 percent. About 35 000 white farmers still dominate this sector. They drive an industry that creates about 740 000 jobs and contributes about 2.5 percent to GDP.

Ironically, a government review of the first phase of Land Claims shows that much of the farm-land returned to its rightful owners has become either less productive or unproductive. This is no surprise, because to make land productive one needs investments, tools, credit, know-how and experience.

Government has spent billions buying land on the "willing buyer, willing seller" policy but has failed to match this with the resources and capacity-building for the new owners.

At the end of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Desmond Tutu co-authored a final report that included a number of recommendations. One of these was that whites should pay some kind of Restitution, once and for all. The idea was for there to be some kind of Endowment Fund to assist those who had been generally (not specifically) injured and marginalized. This never happened. So one opportunity to drain away the pent up bitterness and hatred was sadly missed. Before long that frustration has started to spill over into the call for "radical economic transformation".

2.9 The Land is Ours

Advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi is the author of a book called The Land Is Ours. At a GIBS event in mid-2018 - as reported by the GIBS NEWS - he called South Africa's land claim programme to date "an unmitigated disaster." He argued that in order to address the hunger for land, South Africa needs to move to a model of redistribution, rather than one of restitution. This will require a more flexible model that abandons the fixation with market-driven standards.

Professor Ruth Hall of the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (Plaas) argued at the same GIBS event that the failure of land reform was not due to Section 25 of the Constitution, but rather to lack of political leadership and of clear policy, as well as mismanagement and corruption. "The current pace of land reform is politically untenable. The state must begin to think more creatively," she said.

Ngcukaitobi explained that the Constitution is a framework to facilitate socio-economic transformation. Section 25 is in fact an anti-property clause, as it allows the state to interfere in property matters, thereby correcting the wrongs of the past. However, land reform has been constrained because expropriation was only allowed for public purpose and in the public interest. To date, it has always followed the market principle of willing buyer, willing seller.

"I am now convinced that it is impossible to embark on an effective land reform programme if we fixate on a market driven standard. It is clear that the market will simply never deliver land reform at all," Ngcukaitobi said at the GIBS event.

He argued that no emerging market nation had achieved land reform based on the market system. Instead, a flexible model would be more suitable, as this would offer a spectrum of compensation ranging from expropriation without compensation, to compensation according to the Just and Equitable payment principle of Section 25.

He didn't mention Jubilee principles! Especially ones administered by honest-to-God matchmakers.

According to the GIBS NEWS: He said that Land Reform had been "bedeviled by corruption from within," as land owners, claimants and government bureaucrats were all within the net of corruption. The institutions of land reform are "weak, corrupt and collapsed," he said, and should be placed at the centre of the economy, rather than outside of the economic cluster.

Ngcukaitobi said land reform should be an administrative, rather than a judicial process, with the courts only needed for review of decisions.

Hall said: By focusing on restitution rather than redistribution the state had created a slow and onerous process. The burden of proving redistribution is simply too high: "The whole point of land reform is the redistribution of land. Restitution costs more money and time and requires more bureaucrats to prove dispossession," she said. argued that land reform is undervalued as a project by government. "We need to revitalise our institutions and rethink how they are configured." (Thanks to the GIBS NEWS service for the above observations of that event, which I did not attend.)

2.10 Land Invasions and Occupations

New political parties and movements like *Economic Freedom Fighters* and *Abahlali baseMjondolo (Land and Dignity)* have emerged, largely as a result of this slow pace of change. The EFF scored very high in the 2019 elections, landing 44 seats in Parliament (out of 400 seats). Its rallying point is the "Land issue"...

They say that when the whites arrived in Africa, they had the Bible and the blacks had the land. The whites preached to the blacks who closed their eyes to pray. When they opened their eyes, they held the Bible and the whites had the land. There is a lot of truth in this parable. For me the aim is how to redistribute land fairly – without losing the Bible on either side.

Debate rages - even among blacks - how important Land really is to economic advancement. And a related concern is what will happen to Food Security if productive land is parcelled out to people who don't have the skills or capital to keep it that way? In other words, whether *productivity* is perhaps a deeper criteria than ownership?

The question of *who owns the land* is even deeper than fundamental – it is visceral. First, though, comes the Political Science question of how such critical decisions should be made? Who makes the decision, for example about expropriation of land without compensation? If the land was really stolen from the blacks (???), do they have the right just to invade and occupy? Or is the Rule of Law not of paramount importance? Because the result of lawless land invasion could be anarchy.

This has caused a huge rift in the ruling alliance. Some favour “radical economic transformation” including expropriation of land without compensation. Others do not want to disturb the flow of foreign investment into South Africa, to shore up its sagging economy. They argue that expropriation without compensation sends the wrong message to foreign investors.

Probably for this very reason, in the 2019 elections, the number of seats of the Loyal Opposition party (Democratic Alliance) dropped by five and an Afrikaner party on the Right (Freedom Front Plus) picked up six seats. This suggests that white land owners may hunker down to protect their interests.

Meanwhile the DA has made its biggest gains at the level of Municipal elections. It now runs three of the four big metros (Capetown, Pretoria and Joburg). In this respect, it is not exactly the party representing black farmers or aspiring black farmers. It does run one Province as well – the Western Cape. So the temperate area that can grow grapes and wheat for example, is on that DA side. Whereas the Highveld areas that grow maize (the staple food of the blacks) and semi-tropical areas that grow fruit and sugar are largely to the east. It is in this area that most of the enclaves carved out by the British in 1913 and entrenched by apartheid in 1950 are located. In these areas, the Loyal Opposition is stronger in the cities, while government consolidates its support in the rural areas.

This starts to line up a bit like Zimbabwe. But because South Africa is so highly urbanized, the vote may not always be decided by rural areas, as it has been in Zimbabwe. Or at least the opposition can consolidate its gains in the densely populated urban areas, especially at Municipal level – as a counter-balance. In this respect, we are unlike Zimbabwe.

One key question is who needs land most – rural folk or those who have migrated to urban areas? The answer is BOTH. But they need it for very different reasons. Urbanites want peri-urban land to build houses on, or their businesses. These plots are much smaller, and they need services. Rural folk want land to farm. But this in turn raises various technical issues, reviewed in the next section.

Priority must be given to making unproductive resources productive. This applies both to unused land, and to unemployed youth. For human capital is probably the most valuable resource that any country has. Citizens need to see unemployed youth through these lenses. To heat up the economy, we need to get them working. Not all of them aspire to be farmers. But it would suit many who basically have no other options. And in truth, they or their forbears may have urbanized because of the scarcity of land in the rural areas. Lest we forget... the forced removals.

Back in the days when the ANC still held the high moral ground, Oliver Tambo said: “A nation that doesn’t take care of its youth doesn’t have a future – and doesn’t deserve one”.

The statistics speak for themselves:

- 21.7 million youth in South Africa (between the ages of 14 and 35)
- 7.5 million of these are out of school and out of work
- School-leavers have a 1 in 10 chance of finding a job in the first year after high school
- The longer one is unemployed the harder it is to land a job

- 75 percent of the Unemployed are youth
- The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Survey indicates South Africa has a low level of entrepreneurship. Our rate is 10.6 per cent compared to rates of 30 per cent in Nigeria, Malawi, Zambia and Ghana. Self-employment as a Township or Rural Enterprise is really a more realistic solution for many youth than finding a “job” in the formal sector of the economy
- Although 75 per cent of Africa’s population are engaged in farming, only 3% of African university students are enrolled in Agriculture

Youth are demoralized and alienated. Unions and cooperatives are getting older demographically. For example, almost 75 percent of COSATU members are over the age of 35. Very few youth even registered to vote in the 2014 elections. Only half of the electorate registered to vote – and most of those unregistered voters were under 35. To the extent that some read the 2019 election results as “withdrawal of consent”. The generation gap is expected to cause what Mo Ibrahim calls “a tsunami of youth”.

2.11 Land Reform

I have been monitoring the Great Debate for several years. Although there are still some contentious points, I believe that significant progress has been made. By this I mean that there are now some points that most voices agree on, even though they still strongly disagree on other points.

This following list does not go deep into any of the points. It is more of an effort to scope the debate about Land Reform – not to argue from one side or another.

Agreement

1. I think that there is a general recognition across the board that some kind of Land Reform is an imperative. No one really disagrees that inequality is too high, that unemployment is too high (especially among youth), and that food security risks affect all citizens.
2. There is also recognition that government has been working on Land Reform, and that it has in fact obtained a large inventory of land. There is also general agreement that government has been moving too slow. At the present rate, it will just take too long. In particular, there has been a bottleneck in redistributing the land obtained. So there is a tank of state-owned land available for redistribution, if only ways can be found to speed up allocation.
3. There is also agreement that the immediate focus on redistributing land should be on unproductive land. Taking away land that is currently productive make little sense when there is vacant land that is not producing. In fact, productivity is as much of an issue as ownership. Use it or lose it.
4. What is becoming clear is that a distinction must always be made between restitution, redistribution and obtaining clear title. Restitution centres on “land claims” where people

lost their land within living memory, and they want it back. Redistribution centres on expropriation from the haves, to be given to the have-nots. And clear title is about the fact that people are using land in a productive way, but they don't actually own it themselves. So for example, they can't use it to leverage bank loans which could stimulate their productivity. Whenever the Land Reform debate rages, this distinction has to be made.

5. Another distinction that everyone agrees is significant is rural versus urban. Farmland is needed to increase productivity and jobs in rural areas. Whereas in urban areas, land-hunger is for building plots *near to where their jobs are*. Obviously there is a difference in size and the kind of service required to support the new land owners.
6. It may seem like splitting hairs, but another distinction needs to be made in the rural sphere. There are three kinds of land – homesteads, pasture and cultivated fields. Agriculture includes livestock (that needs pasture) and crops (planting and harvest). Homesteads need electricity, roads, water, fences, etc. You cannot debate Land Reform in the rural context without making this distinction.
7. Finally, there is general agreement that while clear title is not the ONLY thing that farmers need, in order to succeed at being productive, it is a prerequisite to sustainable farming. This issue is most contentious of all in the lands owned by Trusts. In these settings, the tribal authorities do not want to give up their traditional system and change to a “foreign” system of title deeds.

Disagreement

8. Perhaps the biggest point of disagreement is how much of a priority Land Reform is, in the overall scheme of things. Some argue that other issues like unemployment and crime may be more important. One poll of voters indicated that Land Reform was the 13th priority on the list of election issues, once feedback was averaged. But parties like EFF do not agree and are not relenting. After all, Land Reform is EFF's mantra.
9. There is huge disagreement on the proportions of existing land ownership. Whites argue that the proportion of all land that they own is exaggerated. Some say that as much as 68 percent of the land is “arable”, but others say it is much less. This goes back to “splitting hairs” as in point #6 above. It is doubtful that 68 percent of South Africa could be cultivated and grow crops. But if you include pasture for grazing livestock, it would be much more. And even more if you include steep mountain-sides that are OK for forestry. No one has definitive answers on this, so some statistics could be “fake news”.
10. There is disagreement on whether the land was “stolen”. Ironically, the Ba Boroa agree that it was stolen, but say that the blacks (coming in overland from the north-east) stole it from them first, only to have it stolen from them by the whites (coming in by sea, to ports of call along the southern coastline). It is even more ironic that Africans are now “invading” Europe – by sea. The same way that the Europeans invaded Africa. Politicians like Mosiuoa Lekota agree that there were wars followed by treaties and that this was not “stealing”.

11. There is disagreement on the level of risk involved in expropriation. Some believe that this could start a civil war, or a domino-effect that could crash banks and manufacturing. Cyril Ramaphosa tries to assure investors that government won't allow it to get out of hand. He clearly does not want to scare away investors or have it result in a downgrade by the ratings agencies. But the memories of land grabs in Zimbabwe are there, on everyone's mind.
12. There is disagreement on the probability of emerging black farmers succeeding. Land is not all they need – they also need skills, inputs, infrastructure and credit. Some doubt that they will get adequate support. They think that the “surge” will subside with land being sold back to whites – because they say what people really want is money. Indeed, a significant number of those who succeeded in land claims ended up selling their land, not farming it.
13. The big sticking point is Land Invasion. Some parties like EFF are still championing it. Abahlali baseMjondolo Land and Dignity is constantly pushing the envelope. But others are saying that there will be no “land grabs”. EFF rhetoric gets nasty at times, even racist. There is clearly some frustration that the ANC has deflated the momentum that EFF has had for several years. (To some extent the EFF may have done this to themselves, by their role in the VBS scandal, etc.) There are many - including blacks - who do not want actions to be taken that challenge the Rule of Law and “Rainbowism”.

It is telling that this most serious point of disagreement is unlucky number 13. It is a time bomb. Some would say that the Land Reform debate has been generating more heat than light. However, I do see progress. I believe that our country – and especially our youth - owe a debt of gratitude to the EFF for getting this issue onto the front burner. Something has to be done to address the economic inequality. Biblically speaking, we need a Year of Jubilee.

However, EFF is now not the only game in town, talking about Land. A number of other entities have entered the debate in a big way and are prepared to challenge and test legislative decisions in the courts. For example, Agri SA, Afriforum and the Institute for Race Relations. And others. This will have the effect of *slowing down the process*, which will be frustrating to some, but is likely to assure that implementation – when it comes – will roll out carefully. Without the nightmare scenarios that we remember in Zimbabwe.

If all parties can keep their eyes fixed on the horizon of productivity, food security and sustainability, then a solution can be found. It may not suit everyone, but a peaceful and just resolution is clearly in everyone's best interests. We must try to think out of the box and to innovate new ways of collaborating together in a spirit of non-racialism and constitutional democracy.

3. Prospectus for a JUBILEE LAND BANK

Here is the heart of the matter – what South African churches can unite TO DO.

We propose the formation of a JUBILEE LAND BANK, to break the deadlock over Land Reform. This combines the prophetic vocation (lobbying for JLB's role) with a peace-making vocation.

In short, that established farmers (i.e. Boers) be challenged to pay a 10 percent land tithe – that is, ten percent of their land. In exchange for the prospect of immunity from expropriation. With some built-in provisos on land-use that must be monitored closely – not by government but by the JUBILEE LAND BANK itself.

The Board or Steering Committee of this JUBILEE LAND BANK could include:

- Relevant government figures (e.g. agriculture, land, justice, treasury, etc.)
- Representatives of the participating farmers, and their representatives (e.g. Afriforum, Freedom Front Plus, etc.)
- Representatives of the poor and marginalized seeking land restitution (e.g. Abahlali baseMjondolo Land and Dignity, Economic Freedom Fighters, etc.)

The JUBILEE LAND BANK would set up a 44 Secretariats to handle:

- Donations of land by farmers into its common pool
- Allocations to applicants who are youth looking for land to farm
- Coordination of related inputs from other sources (e.g. training, inputs, farm credit, etc.)

This JUBILEE LAND BANK would subscribe to a Jubilee Charter that will list relevant principles derived from Biblical Jubilee (see chapter 5 below). This would not turn back the clock to the time of Moses (even though he was, after all, one of the greatest African leaders of all time). Rather, it will cherry-pick key principles from the Year of Jubilee, that can be applied as a compromise to bring together parties that are highly polarized. These can reconcile what seem to be irreconcilable positions in the Great Debate.

First, though, let us take a quick tour of some institutional role models that inspire this proposal...

3.1 Institutional Role Models

In my limited experience, I can think of four other such “joints” (Ephesians 4:16) in the Body of Christ. There are probably many others:

a) The Zimbabwe Association of Church-Related Hospitals

ZACH was founded as a single point of contact between church-owned-and-run hospitals (mostly in rural areas) and government. Government health institutions operate mainly in urban areas. Most rural health care is still provided by mission hospitals. This NGO has a very narrow focus – health. For example, any imports of medicines from the Vatican to a rural Catholic hospital in Zimbabwe is consigned to ZACH (in the capital Harare). It negotiates the cargo's passage through customs and delivers it to the respective mission hospital(s).

This model captures economies and efficiencies of scale. By offering the same scope of services to all church denominations that operate mission hospitals, ZACH has some clout with government.

For example, to negotiate with the Ministry of Health for the wages and benefits paid to all health care workers in all of the mission hospitals. This also creates a uniformity that is just and fair.

b) Christian Development Trust Foundation

This NGO exists in South Africa to provide credit to church congregations that want to build a sanctuary. Not to be mistaken for “church planting” this function is very specific. It is about church buildings. Commercial banks will not lend money to church congregations to build a sanctuary because they do not regard tithing as reliable “business” income. Thus, when it comes to church growth, the CDTF plays a critically important role.

Priority is naturally given to member organizations that have contributed capital to the fund (directly, or indirectly through affiliates overseas). But not to the exclusion of any congregation that wants a new or bigger church building. This is a very narrow remit, governed by a Board that represents various church organizations. Church congregations must pay back their building loan over an agreed period of years, so that CDTF’s capital can be revolved - to assist more churches.

c) The Canadian Foodgrains Bank

The CFGB was founded as a single point of contact between generous Canadian farmers and famine victims around the world. A dozen or so church denominations govern the CFGB jointly, each with two seats on the Board. Their various “mission partners” overseas provide many windows on food insecurity or famine – especially in Africa. Where that arises from time to time, the CFGB delivers foodgrains to areas that are nutritionally challenged.

This civic action by Canadian farmers attracts additional government funding in a country which already has huge food surpluses to manage in its economy. Basically, once a core membership was established by the CFGB, it then used that identity to leverage some important concessions from government. In a way, it is reminiscent of feeding 5 000 people with only five loaves and two fishes.

My belief is that government in South Africa might grant “immunity from expropriation” to farmers who have donated generously to the JUBILEE LAND BANK? Bearing in mind that the amount of land needed for poor and unemployed youth to farm is finite. Not all the unemployed want to return to the land from urban areas. Not all of them want to pursue a future in agriculture. For example, although agriculture is the vocation of 97 percent of Africa’s population, only 3 percent of those registered in African universities are studying agriculture. This says something. Agriculture may in many cases be the default-drive more than the career of choice?

d) The Liberty Trust

In New Zealand, space is at a premium and housing prices are very high. This was in the early stages of creating a class system, in which youth were often unable to buy and own a home. Prices were just out of reach, exacerbated by mortgage interest rates.

So churches pooled their resources. They encouraged wealthy people to “park” some of their savings – interest free – in the Liberty Trust. This pool of capital then makes interest-free loans to youth - only to buy homes. These loans are secured by first bonds. Money cannot be borrowed for consumer or business purposes – Liberty Trusts only lends money to buy homes.

There are some provisos involved, for example that borrowers must be savers too. You cannot apply for a bond until you have joined and been saving regularly for at least six years. This constitutes a contribution by the home Buyer towards the purchase. Then the balance of the purchase price is borrowed, secured by a first mortgage. But in the context of that country, the Liberty Trust basically makes it possible for young families to do the impossible – buy a house.

However, an institution like this requires a significant “buy in” from the Christian community. And it requires a keen sense of Justice on the part of its investors. They are making a social investment. It is not an investment in their own future as much as an investment in their country’s future.

The relevance to our proposal that a JUBILEE LAND BANK be formed is that it can include some stiff provisos for those who are allocated land. For example, that the land cannot be re-sold for a long period of time, perhaps 25 years – or it will revert to the original owner. If the land is still being farmed after 25 years, and has contributed to national Food Security throughout that period, then the title can be transferred into the name of the family that is farming it. In this way, title will pass immediately from the farmer making the “land tithe” to the JUBILEE LAND BANK (in esgrow) – but only to the recipient family if they keep with it productive. This is in keeping with the prevailing government practices.

3.2 Immunity from Expropriation

To leverage an agreement with government in this respect would take a lot of clout. That can be obtained through two tandem actions:

- a) Strong lobbying by ALL churches and church denominations in favour of the formation of and rationale for a JUBILEE LAND BANK
- b) Significant levels of buy-in by farmers, contributing land to the JUBILEE LAND BANK

Ideally, this immunity from expropriation might be embedded as an amendment to the constitutional amendment (draft Bill number 1409) currently being prepared for MPs to vote on. When the proposed changes to Section 25 of the Constitution are presented to Parliament, the Afrikaner community has promised to resist it - first in the courts and then by “booby-trapping” its implementation. One farmer posted on FaceBook all the steps that he would take if government should expropriate his land. It was a bit like Saddam Hussein setting the oil wells on fire as he retreated out of Kuwait! It was a colossal waste of resources - that polluted the environment terribly as well!

One key feature of this proposal is that it puts the Oversight and Administration of the lands invested in the JUBILEE LAND BANK, into the hands of a non-state entity. Not into a State Enterprise that is fully owned by government. State enterprises have a tendency to fail.

Once the new farms are functioning, a symbolic lease payment should be made TO THE LAND BANK by the Recipient who occupies the land for farming. This can be zero at first, then begin at merely a nominal level, once the farm is prospering. On this basis, the Recipients also contribute to the on-going functioning of the Land Bank. However, the hand-over after 25 years should be free of charge.

This immunity from expropriation is meant to reflect the fact that Jubilee was always a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon. The sabbatical year fell every seven years, but the Year of Jubilee was every 49 years.

3.3 Jubilee principles

This structure of the JUBILEE LAND BANK should be at District level – where farmers donating land and Recipients can know one another, or at least the prevailing local customs and practices.

In keeping with the latest trending in the ANC, it should align with District Municipalities. There are only 44 districts in South Africa, compared to 225 Local Municipalities. Most people can manage to reach a district office, whereas reaching a single provincial office could be difficult for some applicants.

The point is that in the Year of Jubilee, economically inactive people were encouraged to return to their roots, their home areas, to obtain land to start over again. Space was created to make them economically active again. At the risk of this sounding a bit like the so-called “homelands”, the truth is that taking pressure off of the urban areas could probably alleviate some stresses felt “in town”. Mayor Mashaba will tell you that there is too much over-crowding, putting too much pressure on the provision of urban services. He would no doubt be happy to see a “back-to-the-land movement”!

This JUBILEE LAND BANK is proposed only for productive land, that would be farmed, in one way or another. It does not apply to urban or peri-urban land to build housing on. The language often used for residing on agricultural land is “homesteads”. Yes, you live on the land too, but it is economically productive land, not primarily a residential site.

The proviso that the land be farmed productively for 25 years has been outlined above. The 44 Secretariats of the Land Bank should monitor the financial statements (or at a minimum the tax returns) of the Recipients. There must be active monitoring – not by government which has slowed down to a disappointing pace on its original ambitions for Land Claims.

If a recipient does not succeed, and abandons his new agri-business, the land will not revert immediately to the original owner - for the full 25 years. The JUBILEE LAND BANK can then re-allocate it to other applicants.

3.4 How roll-out will work

It is early days to outline this in detail, but some obvious steps can be listed:

- a) **Letter of Intent** – a farmer contacts his district JUBILEE LAND BANK offering a “land-tithe”
- b) **Site inspection** – the JUBILEE LAND BANK visits the farm to verify that the land on offer is suitable for agriculture
- c) **Survey** – the site must be properly mapped by a Land Surveyor

- d) **Transfer or attachment** – Ideally the title of that site is transferred into the name of the JUBILEE LAND BANK – in esgrow. Otherwise, the Deeds Office must find another way to protect it from being sold off in future – except to the Recipient. The Deed of Sale can include a first right of refusal for the farmer donating the land to claim it back if the provisos of the JUBILEE LAND BANK are not honoured – but only after 25 years
- e) **Applications for farm land** – on an on-going basis, the JUBILEE LAND BANK will register youth who seriously want to return to the land... to become economically active in agriculture
- f) **Screening** – applicants need to be vetted, and to present a Business Plan that outlines the kind of farming they want to engage in
- g) **Allocation** – in due course, applicants will be matched with available land in the JUBILEE LAND BANK
- h) **Approval** – a committee not involved in day-to-day affairs of the JUBILEE LAND BANK should validate the allocation proposed by staff
- i) **Esgrow agreement** – a kind of standard-form Lease agreement is signed between the applicant and the JUBILEE LAND BANK. There will be no annual charges at first until the farm enterprise is operating – then only a nominal annual fee. This fee is only meant to contribute to the sustainability of the JUBILEE LAND BANK, which will have on-going operating costs. But at no point will the Recipient ever pay for the land. It is Jubilee land.
- j) **Monitoring** – Recipients are asked to submit an annual report to the JUBILEE LAND BANK. If the agri-business fails and the Recipient abandons the site, the Secretariat can make more efforts at “match-making”. For up to 25 years. If by that time there is still no self-sustaining farm venture on that property, then it can revert to the farmer who donated it.
- k) **Eviction** – if the Recipient abandons the property or turns to business un-related to agriculture, the Lease agreement will state that these are grounds for eviction of the Recipient. The land in the JUBILEE LAND BANK must be perpetually farmed, thus contributing to personal and national Food Security.
- l) **Release** – if the applicant establishes a viable farm venture that is still conducting business after 25 years, then the JUBILEE LAND BANK will transfer title into the name of the Recipient.

3.5 How to sound the trumpet

“Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land.” (Leviticus 25:9)

Jesus was not exactly welcomed with open arms when he announced that a Year of Jubilee was long overdue. Surely no one would argue with his manifesto of preaching sight to the blind, etc... this

should remind church leaders that society and government will try to shrink our church role into a non-threatening space of social contribution. Welfare relief and development projects...

But preaching liberation to the captives sounded a bit more ominous... and when he got to preaching the Year of Jubilee, he was regarded as plain dangerous.

Trumpets are not soft and sweet like violins, they are shrill and loud. Especially when they are all blasted simultaneously! So a date was set and the Levites (i.e. church leaders) were commanded to sound their trumpet *“everywhere... throughout the land.”*

This is what needs to be done in South Africa. We need to set a date, and it should be before the end of 2020. Because the next municipal elections are likely to be in the first half of 2021.

Then not just one man in one synagogue but religious leaders all across South Africa – in churches, mosques and synagogues – need to deliver a shrill “wake-up call”.

The score to play from

Let me begin with a horizontal axis that runs from left to right:

<i>Values</i>	<i>Policy</i>	<i>Practice</i>
Beliefs Convictions	Guidelines Agreements	Behaviour Lifestyle

We all operate this way. What we do, the way we behave (i.e. praxis), is determined by our “policies”. If we are asked for a bribe, for example, our reaction will depend on what we decided to do when asked. As church leaders we may say “No, I don’t pile wood onto that fire.” So we refuse to pay. Such a policy is rooted in something deeper – for example the belief that “honesty is the best policy”. In fact, honesty is fairly superficial - a virtue can be seen or observed. But underneath that is perhaps a commandment *“Thou shalt not steal”* as a guideline, or even a deep sense that you don’t want others to screw you, so you would rather not screw anybody.

Our privilege as religious leaders is to speak to people, either from the pulpit to a congregation, or in counseling to a couple, or by visitation to a family. We can speak at a relatively deep level, including praying. So we are able to do far more than write Opinion Editorial to the media.

There is also a vertical axis from top to bottom, to keep in mind in defining what we can do:

	<i>Values</i>	<i>Policy</i>	<i>Practice</i>
<i>Personal</i>	Beliefs	Guidelines	Lifestyle
<i>Corporate</i>	Core values Aspirations	Manifesto By-laws	Compliance
<i>Community</i>	Rights Reciprocity	Constitution Legislation	Good citizenship

The horizontal logic continues to operate in the same way, but now we can move to lower lines like our congregations, our denominations or our inter-faith networks. These are organizations or entities and they must all come to terms with their deepest dimensions. Especially when there is a crisis of some kind – perhaps a conflict or austerity measures – we need to “dig deep” as a group.

Political parties are also organizations, although they can be larger and relate simultaneously to many communities. We are watching an awakening in this respect when an enclave from within like the Stalwarts speaks up. They do not just rebuke issues of non-compliance, you begin to hear it said that Dube, Luthuli and Tambo had different values. That the party has drifted away from its deepest moorings.

Once again as church leaders we have the privilege - and responsibility - to speak about morality and social justice, not just about issues like State Capture. We can go deeper in our critique, and we must. When the prophet Nathan told King David the story about the rich man stealing the poor man’s sheep, he was not just talking about impropriety or promiscuity. He was talking about disobedience and abuse of power.

The Jubilee Zone

	<i>Values</i>	<i>Policy</i>	<i>Practice</i>
<i>Personal</i>	Beliefs	Guidelines	Lifestyle
<i>Corporate</i>	Core values Aspirations	Manifesto By-laws	Compliance
<i>Community</i>	Rights Reciprocity	Constitution Legislation	Good citizenship

Where would you put the *Freedom Charter* on this table?

It was adopted by the Congress of the People – citizens of all ages, races, genders and religions. So it was societal. But it was also primordial – deeper than a policy. If the South African Constitution was the birth of Democracy, then the *Freedom Charter* was its conception.

What does it say about the land? About the resources?

We as church leaders need to address this debate in wider society, but not just at the same technical or practical level that most voices are talking at. Because when I say that both whites and blacks are deeply devout God-fearers, I am seeing that as a way to draw rich and poor together into a consensus.

Jesus taught about love. Loving God and neighbour is the same thing, he said. He taught about social justice and tended to be harder on the rich than on the poor. Does that surprise anyone?

And right up there along with sight for the blind and liberation for the captives was “*the acceptable year of our Lord*”. Teaching Jubilee principles is something that we cannot escape. And we cannot address it superficially with issues like practicality.

Sounding the trumpet

Once again, the tectonic plates are shifting with China now emerging as a second global super-power. BRICS is trying to assert itself in new ways, and with the termination of the USA’s veto-power at the International Monetary Fund, some foresee the US dollar being challenged by the Yuan as the currency of choice for international trade. (If the other option is not chosen – to not have ANY foreign exchange currency but to trade on-line using crypto-currencies.)

To sound the trumpet these days, inside South Africa, one would need to get the Zionists on board for sure, and some pentecostal churches like Rhema, along with some para-church ministries like Shalom Ministries - *to try to validate that Biblical guidelines are relevant* to the issues facing citizens.

Politically, the internal landscape has also changed. There are the centrist splinter parties like Cope and UDM, as well as the new boys on the block like *Economic Freedom Fighters* (sometimes called populists or even worse – fascists). On the Left, there are trade unions leaving the ruling alliance in droves, and the SA Communist Party may contest the next elections on its own?

Then there are new formations like Save South Africa and the Stalwarts, and the Freedom Movement – all vying to arrest State Capture and to preserve constitutional democracy and the rule of law. The strength and resolve of both the Judiciary and our Section 9 institutions are being tested, but seem to be holding firm. The trumpeting of Jubilee can start in civil society, where faith groups are now nested, but needs to influence and ultimately convince both government and business (i.e. public and private sectors) that *we need a game-changer*.

In the era of “fake news” the term “radical economic transformation” has been kidnapped by the crony capitalists to try to get themselves re-elected. But their deeds do not line up with their words.

So there is a real prospect of a shift back to the centre/right and maybe to Coalition governments starting at the 2024 elections. South Africa may be shifting back from “market socialism” to “welfare capitalism”. Not all of these are white parties like the Freedom Front Plus. Some are mixed like the DA and others are predominantly black like the IFP.

One great thing about Jubilee is that it has stood the test of time. The prophet Moses devised it almost 4000 years ago. It may be “impractical”, but capitalism as a system is only 250 years old and Marxism only half of that. Also, there is a convergence of faith groups - Christians, Muslims and Jews - on the Old Testament. All of these listen closely to the Old Testament Poor Laws.

We need a new Kairos Document or a CONFESSION (a similar kind of mechanism used by the Reformers) that unites the family of faith in announcing that THE LAND BELONGS TO GOD and that ALL citizens should be *working* together with mutual and fair access to the means of production. High unemployment is an abomination, because our Father wants all his children to be productive citizens, busy contributing to growth and prosperity. A “Jubilee Charter” could serve this purpose.

We also need to assure the Boers - who are AMAZINGLY PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS (who have held fast food security - not just for the country but for the region) - that PRODUCTIVITY will be a perpetual litmus test - not mere occupancy or title deed. Sacrificing productivity is not an option; *the purpose at hand is to make more citizens economically active.*

We need to convince the poor that having a tax base of 9 million tax-payers with 15 million other citizens on some kind of direct state assistance is UNSUSTAINABLE. This just cannot go on. As the rich are demanding a guarantee that PRODUCTIVITY will not be lost, the poor need to know that if they fail, the rich can still redeem some unproductive land – after 25 years. This element is either missing or un-spoken in the Marxist manifestos of EFF and the SACP. (Which actually makes them seem like they are anarchists.) Their policies are too radical and too revolutionary – to the extent that they endanger stability.

There are already studies showing that land redistribution can make productivity fall off - THAT PROSPECT MUST BE SUBJECTED TO CULLING. To me that is the genius of Jubilee. It keeps coming back... every 49 years in a cycle... which means that if you don't produce, you lose your place, and go to the back of the line. Churning.

Jubilee as starting over

Let us sound the trumpet to say that both views were mistaken: ***the land belongs to God.***

God is our father. We are *all* his children. And God has NO GRANDCHILDREN.

Let us not invade one piece of unoccupied land at a time, starting down a slippery slope that could undermine the Rule of Law. Seriously shaking the love we need for one another, as we now all occupy the same space. The future must define the method we choose for transformation, not the past.

Let us take courageous and radical steps to level the playing field. To reduce unemployment and make ever more citizens economically active. To assure that all South Africans are productive and thus fulfilled.

Sound the trumpet everywhere, from every pulpit and platform. Throughout the land.

4. Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some queries that are often raised:

4.1 Are there really enough takers? Do any urbanized citizens really want to go back to farming? Isn't that anachronistic?

No doubt the number of takers is finite. Not all will choose to go this route. But with 29 percent unemployment, in an economy that is still shedding jobs after 25 years of democratic rule, there are definitely some young people aspiring to return to the land. And to the extent that they succeed, they will promote this as a realistic way out of poverty.

4.2 Why would people want to accept the awful living conditions of shacks in shanty townships, if they could rather live in an idyllic homestead setting?

It's easier said than done. Relatively few South Africa citizens have the skill-sets of "peasants" or "subsistence farmers", like you find in other African countries. Farming successfully requires a number of factors, not just land. (Starting with water...) And of course, not all land is fertile. Some is only suitable for pasture or even forestry. This transition is fraught with risks. It is not idyllic.

4.3 Is land really such a big thing in the Age of Information? Many middle-class blacks and whites only own a small lawn in front of their residence. Their only farm implement is a lawnmower. Isn't this movement really about restitution or even revenge?

It is true that artisans, traders and performers do not need land to succeed. And it is also true that the Ba Baroa and Bantus were severely mistreated. But we need to put less emphasis on the past and more on the future. After 25 years of ANC rule, the economy is still shedding jobs. While population is exploding. Definitely agriculture is not a panacea – but at the same time, it IS one way forward.

4.4 There is plenty of space still in rural South Africa for the few who really want to farm. But not many want to work for long hours, out in the hot sun, for minimal return. And anyway, government still has a lot of land to give away, without disturbing productive farms. So why inconvenience farmers with this proposal?

The honest truth is that statistics vary from one entity to another, but there does not seem to be any definitive "truth". What we do know is that government is drafting a constitutional amendment that will enable it to expropriate land without compensation. Whether they can get it through Parliament - and then through the Court challenges - remains to be seen. But it could be coming, in the foreseeable future. So why not create a "via media" than can help to mitigate its impact? Also, the process is taking a long time. Meanwhile, frustration among youth is building up a head of steam. Populist opportunists are riding that impetus (while they feather their own nests). So it seems like a good strategy to introduce a practicable solution as a "pressure relief valve".

4.5 Is there time? The EFF has a head start – they have run two election campaigns and have 44 seats in Parliament. During apartheid, it took 40 years to get the church to come round, and there were still some hold-outs.

Don't be fatalistic. We have a much more "open society" now than under apartheid. And far better communication tools as well. No one wants the space to be occupied by populists who turn out to be opportunists. Communication technology exists that is powerful and fast – yes, there is still time. But the church needs to converge on this opportunity earlier rather than later. The challenge is not time as much as whether churches are up to their prophetic vocation or not. If not, maybe Marx was right about religion being an "opiate"?

4.6 Isn't this role too big for a non-state actor? Can a JUBILEE LAND BANK really keep from being the next Eskom with a huge pool of land held in esgrow? What are the prospects that such an ambitious entity can remain corruption-free?

It could become huge, God willing. There have to be checks and balances in place at all levels. Operating at district level assures that there will be 44 smaller audits. Good cross-representation on the Board of Directors is mission-critical. Letting all the diverse interest groups check on operational and financial reports, from their perspective.

4.7 Will the JUBILEE LAND BANK also provision other inputs for the Recipients of land? Like farm equipment, inputs, credit and training?

The short answer is No. It is a land bank, and other entities exist for farm credit, agricultural extension, and training. But a land bank can proactively lobby Suppliers to extend credit on fair terms to Recipients, banks to lend on the strength of the Esgrow Agreement, and extension services to support the emerging agri-businesses with mentoring. So we will try to "coordinate" other support systems for the Recipients, but they must source these directly.

4.8 Is the JUBILEE LAND BANK not duplicating the role of the existing Land Bank?

No. The existing Land Bank is something of a misnomer. It provides loans FOR land, not OF land. In other words, it lends money to farm projects – to obtain inputs, equipment, and possibly land acquisition. But it does not "store" land, or hold it in esgrow as the JUBILEE LAND BANK would do. In fact, the Land bank has been doing that since 1912 – since before the Natives Land Act of 1913. It is fair to say that over its long history, the farm credit that it has extended has been mostly to white farmers. That may have changed in recent decades? But most land still remains in the hands of white farmers – although accurate statistics on that are unavailable.

4.9 Well speaking of duplication, is the JUBILEE LAND BANK necessary when amending the constitution to allow for expropriation without compensation is basically fait accompli?

Look, according to the "worst case scenario", white farmers own 82 million hectares. (They contest the accuracy of these statistics.) That is 72 percent of all the farm land in South Africa. Let's say that by some amazing miracle, they ALL decided to contribute a land-tithe in the Year of Jubilee.

That would come to 8.2 million hectares. So if only half of the white farms contributed a land-tithe, that would come to 4.1 million.

Remember that it took government 20 years to re-distribute 4.2 million hectares after 1994. So a land-tithe mechanism could really speed up government lacklustre performance. It is best to see a JUBILEE LAND BANK as value-added. It will speed up a process that could get bogged down in Parliament, the courts, and future elections for a very long time. Only adding to the pent up frustration of youth. It can do no harm, and a generous response from white farmers could result in a strong lobby to leverage immunity from expropriation from government.

4.10 Is that immunity definitive?

Not likely. Perhaps for a period, maybe even another 49 years? If we starting thinking along the lines of Moses, instead of Adam Smith (i.e. Jubilee not Capitalism), land ownership is a cycle not permanent. But our generosity says something to government – “I am acting in the interests of my country, not just in my own interests.” This will never be overlooked. Think of the Giving Pledge, which encourages millionaires to give away half of their wealth. Fifty percent!

4.11 What about lack of know-how and experience? Are they not doomed to fail?

All emerging entrepreneurs need Coaching and Mentoring, in any sector. One role that churches supporting the JUBILEE LAND BANK can have is to mobilize volunteers from the community (and from abroad) to support the Recipients.

5. Biblical “Jubilee”

There is a way. Inequality can be corrected, without losing our cherished Democracy.

The word “Jubilee” is rooted in the Hebrew word for trumpet. Every 50 years, the Old Testament “poor laws” ordained that the playing field should be levelled:

“Count off seven sabbath years - seven times seven years - so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan.” (Leviticus 25, 8-10)

So there was a kind of Freedom Charter already, almost 4000 years ago! Those who had lost their land should have it returned to them. Those who had fallen into indenture (slavery) should be freed. This basically re-set the stage for the next 49-year period. Here are some relevant particulars:

“In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property.

“If you sell land to any of your own people or buy land from them, do not take advantage of each other. You are to buy from your own people on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And they are to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what is really being sold to you is the number of crops. Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God.” (Leviticus 25, 13-17)

This was something of a futures market. Buying and selling land was not a definitive and final transfer of ownership – a notion that came along much later with Capitalism.

“The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

“If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold. If, however, there is no one to redeem it for them but later on they prosper and acquire sufficient means to redeem it themselves, they are to determine the value for the years since they sold it and refund the balance to the one to whom they sold it; they can then go back to their own property. But if they do not acquire the means to repay, what was sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and they can then go back to their property.” (Leviticus 25, 23-28)

It is sort of like T.S. Eliot's lyrics: *“We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time.”*

Economists call it “churning”. There are always businesses going down and others rising. This happens over time. Some entrepreneurs make a fortune, others lose their shirts. Just as some will vote socialist, like organized labour, and others will vote laissez-faire, like factory owners. This goes on, and slowly sediments into classes. Jubilee was a kind of planned, recurrent revolution that shuffled the deck every 50 years. This is different from saying that one platform will work better than another. It is radical, but it is event-based not policy-based.

An interesting distinction was made between urban and rural:

“Anyone who sells a house in a walled city retains the right of redemption a full year after its sale. During that time the seller may redeem it. If it is not redeemed before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to the buyer and the buyer's descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. But houses in villages without walls around them are to be considered as belonging to the open country. They can be redeemed, and they are to be returned in the Jubilee.”

(Leviticus 25, 29-31)

This rings true in South Africa. When parties speak of land invasions, they do not refer to houses in town. They are talking about arable land. Their first target threshold is vacant land – that could be productive but is lying idle.

Exceptions and exemptions

There was already a kind of exemption status for nonprofits:

“The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. So the property of the Levites is redeemable—that is, a house sold in any town they hold—and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. But the pastureland belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession.” (Leviticus 25, 32-34)

Nonprofits in South Africa are caught in a no-man’s land between one school of thought that NPOs should strive to be self-sustaining “social enterprises”, and another that says it is unfair trading for entities that are not taxed to be competing with other actors in the same sector. In other words, some prefer to speak of “the business of aid”. Even nonprofits can sink into insolvency, but they ironically they can’t apply for “business rescue” because they are not businesses. They just go into hibernation. It seems that the priests of old Israel were caught in a similar no-man’s land. They could also lose their urban dwellings, but their respective rural land was untouchable.

Class distinctions

There was no black or white in Hebrew slavery per se – for they were all Semites:

“If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to you, do not make them work as slaves. They are to be treated as hired workers or temporary residents among you; they are to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. Then they and their children are to be released, and they will go back to their own clans and to the property of their ancestors. Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God.” (Leviticus 25, 39-43)

However, there could have been black slaves, for example from Ethiopia:

“Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. You can bequeath them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly.”

(Leviticus 25, 44-46)

Sometimes Jews resented that foreigners ended up on top. Sound familiar? The indentured person’s family was not allowed to become xenophobic, as there was space in the economy for aliens, and migrant workers:

“If a foreigner residing among you becomes rich and any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to the foreigner or to a member of the foreigner’s clan, they retain

the right of redemption after they have sold themselves. One of their relatives may redeem them: An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in their clan may redeem them. Or if they prosper, they may redeem themselves. They and their buyer are to count the time from the year they sold themselves up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for their release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired worker for that number of years. If many years remain, they must pay for their redemption a larger share of the price paid for them. If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, they are to compute that and pay for their redemption accordingly. They are to be treated as workers hired from year to year; you must see to it that those to whom they owe service do not rule over them ruthlessly.” (Leviticus 25, 47-53)

Summing up

Just in case any particular case was missed by the guidelines:

“Even if someone is not redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt.” (Leviticus 25, 54-55)

So the Year of Jubilee addressed both land redistribution and economic freedom. Essentially, it was part of the economics of the ancient world that people fell into indenture (slavery) when they couldn't cope financially with Debt, or when their enterprises failed. It was a built-in assumption, though, that a Jubilee Year would come around in due course. No citizen should be perpetually condemned to poverty or landlessness. But it could not come too often, or that would dampen the market incentives that drove the economy.

Remember that to the Jews of old, the land belonged to God, and those who were *utilizing* it were but His tenants. As a just God, He would not abide a permanent class system. So he ordained this Jubilee mechanism through Moses his prophet to prevent anyone from sinking to the bottom and staying down there at the bottom of the food chain.

My contention is that we do South Africa a disservice to let the land issue be reduced to a racial or generational issue. It is rather a moral or social justice issue. We are not the first to face such a challenge, and in some prior settings, slavery, debt and classes emerged even among people of a uniform colour and race. Unfortunately, playing the race card can make it even worse. When I hear EFF saying that “Whites will never understand the land issue” I just don't agree. Whites have faced it in the past, like in Athens did in 580 BC. Will blacks ever understand the importance of the Rule of Law? Or will they rather just replace European masters with Chinese masters? When I read about the “Chinese take-away” in other African countries, I wonder why the Boers who settled here and proudly call themselves a “white African tribe” are not appreciated more! My plea is that the two issues of race and land be disconnected, so that we can address each in its own right.

The Nazareth Manifesto

Jesus launched his public ministry in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. He ended his announcement that the Spirit of the Lord anointed him with the phrase “*and to announce the acceptable year of our Lord*”.

Most commentators think that he was suggesting that a Year of Jubilee was long overdue.

They promptly removed him from the synagogue and took him to the edge of town to try to stone him. I hope that my reception will be more cordial!

He had to move his ministry headquarters to Capernaum.

There will always be poor people because of “churning”. The Jews arrived in Egypt (Africa) under Joseph but 400 years later a Pharaoh arose “who knew not Joseph”. The once prosperous enclave was enslaved by the Egyptians. There you have it! White Semitic slaves to black Nilotic Africans. In Africa. Times change! We need to keep the racial and economic issues distinct.

Nor can we claim that blacks do no harm to one another. The Hutus (a Bantu race) committed genocide against the waTutsi (a Nilotic race). These are not just different tribes, they are different races.

A later Pharaoh adopted an orphan child called Moses. He became a great liberator, leading the Israelites back to “the Promised Land” of Canaan. It was him who devised the great Moral Code that would provide the core values of that new nation.

Long before Solon invented Democracy, Moses invented Jubilee. So Jubilee was conceived by a son of the soil, an African leader, the leader of a liberation movement.

All Jesus did was to claim that the Spirit of the Lord had anointed him to announce that a Year of Jubilee was long overdue. But the combined interests of the Jewish state and of the Roman Empire crushed him. Because the vested interests of the economic status quo always try to maintain their hegemony.

Green Livelihoods

There are new sectors like Solar energy and Re-cycling waste that can provide much to do in terms of self-employment - in community services that can be money-spinners. But these opportunities exist more in the higher-density urban areas.

But there are also “niches” in Forestry (e.g. social forestry for carbon sequester and fire control), in Roads (e.g. storm-water control using Vetiver grass contouring), the fight against Erosion (i.e. soil conservation and composting), and in water-Retention (e.g. control of alien invasive species) that are labour-intensive *real business opportunities*.

All of the above can converge their efforts on reducing our carbon footprint.

What is the link to Jubilee? Well those who return to the land (or who have land returned to them, whichever way you put it) will be young and under-resourced. Some will be unskilled. Success will not just emerge a few Bible-verses later! It will be hard-won and require a great deal of effort and perseverance. The “churning” will start all over again, with businesses successes and failures. Coupled with the notion of “redemption” this is not quite so scary.

Just as wealth is being concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people at the top, re-distribution of wealth – and land - will only afford small packages for many, many citizens. They need to start with a Vision and a Model of some kind. They will need training, mentoring and inputs. That means a pool of investment capital.

The fundamental difference with Jubilee is that people can begin to imagine “what will I do after the Year of Jubilee, when land is returned to me and when I return to the land?”

Plans need to be viable for farms and businesses to become viable.

But we are all citizens – men and women, black and white, rich and poor. And so many of us are Christians, or Muslims or Jews. All these faiths revere the Old Testament as God’s word. In conflict resolution, one key is to keep your eyes on what you agree on, and to play down what you disagree on.

Do we agree that the land belongs to God?

A majority of South African citizens are monotheists, they fear God.

That He created us all equal?

Equality is entrenched in the Constitution, but it is not yet as reality in everyday life.

And that we are all citizens under one Constitution?

There can be no such thing as “second-class citizens”.

And that the best scenario for everyone is when all needs are satisfied?

Take crime as an example. Inequality breeds crime, which haunts the rich.

There is every reason for ALL South Africans – white and black, rich and poor, male and female, old and young – to join forces and work together for a common purpose.