



Portfolio

Prophet 

Investing in a Jubilee Economy

By Lee Van Ham
June 2001
Reissued October 2004

Please scroll down for text.

Acknowledgements

The words “Dominant System” used throughout to describe the global, Market-driven economy come out of my appreciation for Walter Wink’s Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination (Fortress Press, 1992). There he speaks not only of the Dominant System but the *Domination* System, underscoring that the Dominant System seeks domination, not empowerment, and that it is a system astray from God’s intent thus needing our engagement and God’s redemption.

The deprivatizing of wealth into commonwealth (see Step 7 in this nine step process) was first proposed in my hearing in 1999 by Ched Myers, author and teacher with Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries. Its power grasped me instantly as a needed counterpoint to The Market’s demands of privatizing and commodifying everything. The current Market practice has become idolatry. An alternative practice is necessary.

Portfolio Prophets: Investing in a Jubilee Economy was put into booklet form by Juanita Mangan-Van Ham who also offered many suggestions to increase emphasis and readability, picking up on, as she does so well, the heart of what needs to be communicated.

**“Mr. and Mrs. Profit,
Please Meet Mr. and Mrs.
Prophet”**

Portfolios speak. What do ours say?

For most people, how we bank, save, and invest money proclaims the gospel of the Dominant Financial Culture. Accumulate! Maximize profits! These values drown out consideration of sustainability, the environment, and cries for fairness from the lowest paid workers in the production process. Because “money talks,” we fool ourselves if we pretend that our portfolios are silent. Once we stop to listen to what our portfolios are saying, many of us become aware of a contradiction between what we pray for and what our investments work for. To pray, “give us this day our daily bread,” but then to manage our portfolios to seek greater profits for the very global companies that could arrange food distribution so that everyone receives daily bread, but don’t, is just one such contradiction.

Going beyond the personal, where do our churches bank and invest? Or our church-related colleges? Or any other religious organization with which we have affiliation? Do those investments speak the same message as the Gospels? Invested dollars are not neutral. They shout support to the voices designing today’s global economy or they speak for an

alternative way. Portfolios are not primarily about charity within a system. They impact the system itself, strengthening it or dissenting from it. So does the Gospel as Jesus lived it. Had Jesus been a charity figure, the Dominant System would not have executed him. But when he proclaimed “good news for the poor” through systemic change as well as compassionate engagement, he was criminalized. When portfolios contradict this Gospel, what is heard the loudest by the ears of the world is the message of our portfolios. But when they converge ... wow! New birth happens. Here we must be candid enough to confess regretfully how disconnected we are from Jesus’ life when we hear our pulpits, teaching lecterns, and sharing circles deal with economic issues – indeed, *if* they deal with them at all except in typical stewardship programs. The knack, or perhaps conviction, to interface the Gospel of Jesus with the economics of our lifestyles or with the economic structures of our world has been lost when compared to what Jesus did. Instead, what permeates the worship, study groups, spiritual growth groups, personal improvement groups, and academia is a message closer to the cultural mythology that makes affluence and the broad middle-class the norm. Too often the gospel we hear rationalizes excess and promotes prosperity — hardly a Jubilee spirituality of “good news to the poor” and “release to the captives.”

What follows brings faith and finances into a very different encounter with each other based on the Jubilee spirituality of Isaiah and Jesus (Isaiah 58, 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-22). Jesus, saying up front that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him (Luke 4:18), announced his intent to practice the spirituality of Jubilee – a spirituality with explicit socio-economic practices. Since Jubilee had fallen out of use around him, he startled the leaders and the people by bringing back this part of their tradition and making it alive in what he did. Uplifting the poor. Calling the powerful to actions of social regeneration. The results were progressive and transforming.

We and our portfolios can do the same. Taking our cue from Jesus, as “portfolio prophets” we can use money and wealth to transform society along the lines of Jubilee’s wisdom, a wisdom rooted in the “Great Economy” rather than the Dominant Economies arranged and managed by various Powers. Jubilee rises as a kind of archetypal economy implanted in the hard-wiring of creation’s soul.

What do portfolios that invest in a Jubilee economy look like? To be sure, they vary. The diversity will give greater resonance and impact to our prophetic voices. The following assumptions, steps, and biblical reflection will give impetus to us for using our financial assets to stimulate

an alternative economy described by the biblical Jubilee. This is one way to let our money speak prophetically.

So, proceeding from here, let’s be clear what we are about. In an arena where *profits* dominate, we intend to give attention to *prophets* of a different kind. In fact, we seek to be prophets. Or, if you don’t yet feel up to calling yourself a prophet, then let it be said that we intend to practice being prophetic.

To clarify what I mean, an old word for prophets is *seers* – people who see through the exterior world of quick things and muscle-flexing Powers to a world that sustains us and needs us to sustain it. It is a more enduring reality that insists on the inclusion of the souls of people, of the ancient wisdom of our planet, and of impacts on our children and grandchildren – even to seven generations as the Iroquois people said. Prophets see relationships that sustain life for all and are therefore right and just. Prophets know that God’s ways need everywhere to be considered and to be as faithfully practiced with our assets and lives as we can. So as the prophets Isaiah and Jesus said in talking about the alternative Jubilee economy, good news must be proclaimed to the poor. Only then do we live days and years “acceptable to the Lord,” a phrase the Isaiah prophetic school used to describe the practice of Sabbath-Jubilee (Isa. 58:4-7; 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-18).

Pushing forward, prophets denounce and announce. Prophets see through falseness in the dominant reality and *denounce* it. At the same time, they envision what could be instead, and *announce* that. Jeremiah, for example, able to hear God's call to prophetic witness as a youth, understood that he was "to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). Likewise, the portfolios we create will speak prophetically to The Market, denouncing and announcing. Through our financial investments we want to denounce unethical, unjust practices, and announce more just alternatives. If you are among those who already practice such an alternative strategy, then you have a lot to share with others who would be open to it. Most of us with investments and retirement funds, even if we practice our faith in many other ways, have not developed an investing strategy guided by the biblical prophets or the Sabbath-Jubilee. As just one example, the United Methodist Pension Board is only now in 2001 mobilizing to convert all the denominations' funds to socially responsible investing – perhaps as much as \$30 billion internationally (Reported in Sojourners, p. 11, March-April, 2001). In lauding this important, yet modest, action, we must also note that it exemplifies how slow many Christians have been in exercising active witness with their investments. The steps that follow will change that.

A Few Assumptions

Before going into steps that give our portfolios a prophetic, Jubilee witness, here are some assumptions. You may have several to add.

1. ***Nothing pure is possible in financial investing.*** Whatever faith-values we want our portfolios to proclaim, they will do so imperfectly. Like our lives, inconsistencies and contradictions will persist.
2. ***Every dollar is a vote,*** and, in today's economics-driven politics, how we vote with our dollars is a greater expression of citizenship and patriotism than how we vote in the ballot box. Each dollar votes for our faith values, or for different ones. For open, transparent democracy, or for other styles of management and governance. For decreasing the rich-poor gap or for increasing it. And, consistent with Assumption #1, we won't always vote right.
3. ***Dollars we invest in our lifestyles and portfolios speak a louder witness*** to what we believe about economic justice than those we give in charitable contribution.
4. ***The Market is an enormous Power.*** Treated by many as

deity, it is nonetheless unable to respond to persons or situations where there is no money to attract its attention or power. In other words, *nearly almighty* in some areas, The Market becomes *impotent* in others. It is incapable of responding to the life-needs of the 3-plus billion (half the world's population) now living on \$2 or less per day. In fact, it is often the cause of their plight. Hence the arguments that expect The Market alone to give nearly half the world's population a hand up are empty rhetoric. The Market must be cajoled and coaxed, i.e., handled very differently from where there is money, in order for its power to help rather than harm 50% or more of God's people.

5. ***There is no true Free Market,*** despite the widespread juxtaposition of these two words and the hallowed reverence they receive. If we follow the subsidies and penalties, we see the drivers and managers of The "Free" Market. Truth is, all markets are either more or less managed by someone(s), and mostly they are managed to benefit the very ones who do the managing.
6. ***God's abundant Enough can sustain life for everyone, including Mother Earth.*** By

contrast, the classical economic assumption, which states that we human beings have unlimited wants but the world has limited resources, assumes scarcity. Thus everyone has to scramble for Enough. Some win, others lose. Losers survive on too little, or die. In other words, God made a mistake. People came along with greater desires than could be sustained by the rest of the created world. A theology of Enough corrects this false assumption by expressing God's intent that we all live in the sufficiency of the Divine Enough. Achieving this in real life requires new economic thinking and practice. The Sabbath-Jubilee is such a paradigm and practice. *(It was in a conversation with Art Lyons in the spring of 2001 that he said, "Lee, all economic theories assume scarcity — that human desires are unlimited, but that material resources are limited." This awareness came to him when he studied for his PhD in economics from the University of Chicago. We reflected together on how this contradicts religious teachings on creation, provision, and sustainability. Art is currently on the faculty of North Park University, Chicago, and directs the Master's Program on Community Development in conjunction with the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education.)*

7. ***There is a causal, not casual, connection between rich people and poor people.*** That is, rich

and poor do not just live on parallel tracks disconnected from each other and determined by accident of birth or of other forces. A study of the global system today reveals how it arranges, unintentionally as well as intentionally, for some to be rich and others to be poor. It requires such hierarchy to function. The ironic and hope-filled truth is that whenever we can discover a causal connection in the global system, we can also change it to favor a more equitable distribution of God's resources. Systemic change, more than charity, is what is needed. Charity gives from rich to poor within the system; justice changes the system toward equality.

These seven assumptions, whatever stance we take regarding them, impact our theologies and how our discipleship, i.e., lifestyle, is assessed. Briefly, here are ways that these assumptions impact thoughts and actions.

- Assumption #1 punctures any self-righteousness even as we seek a path of greater rightness.
- Assumption #2 emphasizes that our dollars give us choices and that these choices either boost good or strengthen evil.
- Assumption #3 raises the ante regarding our lifestyles. Living what we believe is an ines-

capable and demanding challenge.

In this vein, Juanita and I acknowledge the need for further conversion in our own portfolios to increase their prophetic voice.

- Assumption #4 names idolatry, both its great power and its impotence. Unless The Market serves God, it replaces God. None of us can invest without engaging this Power. At times, unwittingly, unwillingly, or otherwise, The Market idol will get our obedience. At other times we will receive its benefits or have to pay what it requires of us. Together we can humbly and boldly engage The Market, insisting its great power serve the One who is the true Almighty.
- Assumption #5 presses us to speak truth even when it challenges hallowed economic myths. We need to expose the deceit that markets are free and unfettered. We must ask the questions: Free from whom? Managed by whom? Unfettered from what? Driven by what? If The Market is free from government controls in undeveloped countries, then we can rightly suspect that it is being managed by richer nations. Or by transnational corporations. When the Powers ask us to trust The Free Market as sovereign, they ask for idol worship – for a loyalty that only God is trustworthy enough to receive.

- Assumption #6 implores us to proclaim economic truth that undercuts neither God’s wisdom nor God’s capability to create sufficient provision for Earth and all her inhabitants. Our continued existence as a species depends on it.
- Assumption #7 names a cause for the rich-poor divide. Therefore, by addressing the cause, we can change economic disparity. Regarded as hopeless by many, it becomes hope-filled work. It shows both why the system’s transformation is necessary and that it is possible.

Believing in the possibility of life-giving change, let’s proceed now to do our part.

First steps: Speaking to the Dominant Economy Through Investments

A Jubilee economy is more communitarian and less individualistic or privatized than the dominant economy. So, though Steps 1-6 can be done individually, the process is more genuinely Jubilee if we are able to bring together a few others who are also intent on using financial assets for social transformation in Jubilee fashion. There is lots to learn. Sometimes the progress is slow. Some of the apathy in investing for justice comes from the time and effort it takes. So

the value of a group becomes obvious. Group members encourage each other, share the work of research, increase the learning, and energize one another.

Also, reinvesting isn’t only a rational decision to change how we think about investing. The steps stir our emotions, challenge years of practice, and ask us to put our spiritual faith to the test. We are acting our way into new knowledge. We are developing new habits for our hearts.

The spiritual process of moving into greater prophetic witness with our finances brings us into repentance and conversion – in the best meanings of those words, not their shallow meanings. When Jesus asked us to think the way we need to think in order to conceive of God’s reign happening, he used the word *metanoia*. It means to transcend common ways of knowing or thinking. Thinking out of the box. It got translated as “repent” and has, incorrectly, come to have a judging, condemning, moral connotation. As Jesus used the word “repent” it was not a condemnation, but a vigorous invitation, a plea, and an encouragement to transcend ways of thinking that keep us stuck. So when Mark’s Gospel first presents Jesus (1:15), Jesus says, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand;” our contemporary thinking could better read, “Transcend, for just when you

thought there were no alternatives to the dominant system, the reign of God is making a new beginning. Join me in it.” Prayer, reflection, and truth-filled interaction with a group are vital energies for us to transcend the prevailing wisdom regarding *portfolio profits*, transforming them into *portfolio prophets*.

But *metanoia* embodies more than an intellectual shift in knowing. It is enacted knowing. Changing our thinking is not separate from changing our action. Here the key word is conversion. We gradually, or sometimes quite suddenly, turn from going in one direction to go in a different direction. In this turning of conversion, we acknowledge the truth that the direction of God’s reign differs from where Mammon’s reign takes us.

We proceed, then, acknowledging that we will be impacted as well as our portfolios. Because making a portfolio more prophetic is soul work, it cannot just be turned over to an investment manager. Though a financial advisor who can embrace our purposes can certainly help, *this is spiritual activity, not just economics*. Or better yet, economic decisions are spiritual decisions. The steps that take us into a Jubilee economy are steps of discipleship. They impact the personal, the interpersonal, and the economic systems. And, though taken locally, the steps ripple across the globe,

because today the economy is a global web. Quite amazing!

So, as we work in our society, we are working in our own souls and in the group soul, giving shape to all the relationships engaged in this process. Conversely, what stirs and changes in our own souls as we further enter an economy of Jubilee, needs to be shared with those taking steps with us, for it will impact them as well as the socio-economic structures of society. Such is the nature of real faith expression as we incorporate economics.

.Step 1 — Listen to and dialogue with our investments.

— Let’s start with our investments as they are. No changes. We want first to simply listen to what they say. To whom do they speak good news? What do they denounce? What do we need to learn about some of them to even know what they are saying? Do we hear our faith being expressed or contradicted? Some of them may speak in favor of financial and cultural idols, not the Way of Jesus. Responding out of our heart-felt faith, what are our responses to what we are hearing? If we invite the Divine Presence into our dialog, what words of grace and guidance do we hear?

Once we hear what our portfolios are saying, then we can take steps to change wherever our portfolios

contradict what we profess or what we hear the Voice within us saying.

Step 2 — Learn about shareholder activist witness— how shareholder resolutions might give us a voice for the voiceless.

Often we discover that some of our investments are with companies that do not jibe with our values. The first impulse is, “Oh, I need to move this money somewhere else.” But sometimes we may choose to remain a shareholder in a company in order to work for greater justice through shareholder resolutions. Voted on at annual corporate meetings, these resolutions can denounce a current practice and seek change. How do we learn about these?

The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility has for 30 years coordinated faith-based groups in voting shareholder resolutions as a means of faith-witness in The Market. Their website is www.iccr.org. Another website, www.irrc.org, is provided by the Investor Responsibility Resource Center. A third, www.shareholderaction.org, is provided by a coalition of institutional investors aligned with the Social Investment Forum.

When shareholders organize around a resolution, some corporations move into dialogue around the changes being suggested. Others stonewall.

But it’s all part of engaging the Powers for social transformation, calling the great powers of The Market to serve God’s reign rather than to be estranged from it. Shareholder activism helped end the apartheid structures of South Africa by urging large corporations to divest on moral, economic, and political grounds. Shareholders voices were heard, whereas black and “colored” voices from the “reservations” (called “homelands”) were not. Similarly, shareholders have raised their voices regarding gender issues, diversifying board composition, wages for workers, pay for top management, and many more matters arguing that ethical practice stabilizes a business for endurance in the long run.

Step 3 — Learn more about socially responsible investing (SRI) as an announcing and denouncing way to invest.

The notion that including ethical considerations in our investing automatically reduces profits has been proved untrue. So SRI is growing. In 1997 \$1.2 trillion were invested in socially responsible ways, up from \$40 billion in 1985. (Source: 1997 Report on Responsible Investing Trends in the U.S. Social Investment Forum). “In 1995 the Social Investment Forum reported that nearly 10% of all U.S. investments are made with ethical as well as financial considerations” (*The Corporate Examiner*, Sep. 6, 1996,

publication of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility).

Coop America's newsletter *Real Money* (summer 1999) rated the performance of 45 socially responsible mutual funds that help us partially avoid having our money contradict the values we profess. The word "avoid" is key. Many socially responsible funds practice avoiding businesses that seek profitable bottom lines without regard to the environment, public health, treatment of workers, and other life-damaging impacts. This is often called negative screening. It is a form of denouncing.

But there is also positive screening — funds that choose businesses tilted toward a sustainable planet and toward justice for people. These funds are a form of announcing. A resource such as *Real Money* is valuable to us individually or in a group if we want quick, reliable information without become SRI gurus. (See www.realmoney.org or contact Co-op America, 1612 K St. NW, #600, Washington, D.C. 20006, 202-872-5307)

While socially responsible investing is an important step, it falls short of eloquent prophetic witness. Many negative and positive screening funds still invest low percentages in businesses that will not converge fully enough with our strong emphasis on transformation in society for the purpose of sustaining life. For us, fewer options exist. One

is New Alternatives Fund, Inc. New Alternatives wants to improve our environment. So it proactively seeks out companies that produce the technology for energies from other than fossil fuel and nuclear sources. The "Economist" (London) calls it the "greenest" fund in the United States.

In a recent conversation with financial advisor Bob Jackson of Robert Jackson & Assoc. (Chicago), he spoke of more innovations waiting to be explored. He observes that, currently, SRI tends to be shaped by well-educated people who are part of the Dominant Culture. Inevitably there are blind spots. We need to include people from rural and urban areas who survive in spite of the Dominant Culture. And beyond our own borders, we need to bring people from the Global South, people other than the elites of those countries, into our circle and learn with them how to position dollars for prophetic witness. So far such steps have proved too costly for SRI researchers. But our interest in reinvesting in a Jubilee economy will take us there. So, onward.

Step 4 – We need to reassess where we bank.

Where we bank is an often overlooked player in how our money speaks. Banks are not neutral in our global or local economy. The banking industry best serves those

with power and money. Jubilee tilts toward those without power and those who are economically very vulnerable. Accordingly, a Jubilee economy prefers locally owned, neighborhood banks. The more often money is exchanged in a neighborhood before leaving that neighborhood, the better for the people who live there. Ulrich Duchrow in a paper entitled “The Jubilee as Seen from Europe,” (in 2000) states that all who want to be invested in a Jubilee economy will avoid big commercial banks, especially transnational banks, because of their interest structures and their cooperation with tax and other mechanisms that work for wealthy people and corporations to the disadvantage of the poor. So we need to consider whether where we bank is helping our community – all of it – or showing preference toward only those who have the most.

For example, when Citibank acquired Associates First Capital, it bought one of the worst offenders in predatory lending (See Coop America Quarterly, summer 2001, p. 9). This acquisition is another in a long list of actions by Citibank that places profits ahead of people, community, sustainability, and ethics. Their unhappy track record has led to a website, www.tellcitibank.org, of information for all wanting to engage in activist witness against such banking practices.

There are good alternatives. Neighborhood banks, community development banks, and credit unions can be a better fit in a Jubilee economy. This step becomes even more important in later Steps 7 to 9.

Next steps: Getting Ready to Invest in a Jubilee Economy

Already we’ve made a lot of progress. We have listened to what our portfolios are saying. We’ve integrated faith values in some proactive ways. We are now listening to *profits* (and losses) with the ears of *prophets*. A new and stronger conscience is taking shape in us regarding the money we don’t give, but invest. Our evolving conscience is already able to talk about typical economic practice, evaluate economic assumptions and purposes, and choose alternatives.

We are now ready to step into a spirituality of Enough – God’s abundant Enough. Once we take that step, our portfolios are “all a jabber” with many new options. Even more exciting, these options invite us to venture into projects that transform neighborhoods, the people in them, and ourselves.

Step 5 — We need to answer the question, “How much is enough?” Recognizing that we live in a land shouting “MORE!,”

and that the widespread assumption about investing is that our purpose is to accumulate and concentrate capital, we will not get far into re-investing unless we decide how much is Enough. Our answers will vary. Our needs vary. Our wants vary. But each of us can determine what is our “enough” at this time. As life continues, our answer may change. But a specific answer now will let us take more steps in re-investing. Without it, we won’t get much beyond Steps 1-4. The ancient wisdom of the Sabbath-Jubilee guides us as it defines God’s Enough in the story of the manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16), as well as the remarkable claim of Deuteronomy 15:4 and 11, that if we practice the Sabbath-Jubilee “there will be none with need among you.” II Corinthians 8-9 tells us how early followers of the Way of Jesus were urged to practice this same spirituality of Enough. The Lord’s Prayer picks up on it with the petition for just one day’s bread, trusting God’s abundance to provide enough daily, and with the petition for canceling or forgiving debts so that all may be full participants in the economic life of the community.

We have completed this big step when we can look at the “Continuum for Jubilee Investing” (see centerfold) and know what part of our portfolio exceeds Enough. That part of our portfolio has the capacity to speak prophetically in a different way from

the part included in Enough. The more-than-Enough can create new structures where there are none, structures that shape God’s Jubilee for earth and humanity.

Step 6 – We prepare ourselves to let go what is not ours — the more-than-Enough of our portfolios longs to be reinvested in shaping and implementing Jubilee communities. The more-than-Enough of our portfolios speaks to us with the vigor and vision of the biblical prophets. “We are not yours,” these assets say. “We beg you to give us leave to be joined with those for whom God intended us. We are in captivity in the strange land of affluence and wealth, part of the Domination System. But we long to be released from it and from you. Let us be bearers of the Jubilee, releasing you from your captivity to the Dominant System as we bring good news to the poor.” Step 6 hears this prophetic voice from our portfolio and takes us through the deep inner change of mind and heart, thought and emotion, to ready us for investing in Jubilee.

Practicing Enough brings most of us to a new lifestyle and a new vision for what is right socially. A spirituality of Enough counters the idea that accumulation is simply a matter of being good stewards of what God gives us. The more-than-Enough, often called God’s blessings

to us, are more likely seductions of the Dominant System, “buying us off,” keeping us focused in charitable giving out of our excess rather than changing the flow itself into rivers of justice. When more-than-Enough comes to us, as it does to many through the current Dominant System’s distribution patterns, then it is a matter of justice for us to get it to those to whom it truly belongs. We need to get it to those whose it would be if the Dominant System distributed God’s resources according to God’s intent for all. The Steps that follow help us “do justice” (Micah 6:8) in this way. Portfolio prophets correct distributions of the system that are out of sync with what sustains life. They distribute according to the alternative vision and practice of Jubilee.

By now we have in our minds an amount or percentage of our portfolios that exceeds Enough. We also understand that this amount is not our manna, not our daily bread. It’s like mail mis-delivered. God intended it for someone else, but the human systems of distribution have functioned less rightly than they would if they were fully serving God. So we need to get it delivered to the right address and simultaneously to work at changing the malfunction in the system. With all that exceeds Enough in our portfolios, we make transformation and justice, not charity, our objectives. We seek to change neighborhoods, people, and

society by changing the arrangements and structures of life and lives. In the process, we too are changed.

Now, with a percentage of our portfolio available for new Jubilee practices, and with some vehicles in mind for re-investing, we are ready to “bring good news to the poor.” Just as important, we are also moving to be “released from captivity” to the Dominant System and its excesses – especially those that undermine Jubilee’s radical commitment to participatory democracy and opposition to economic disparity and hierarchy.

A Pause Before We Take More Steps

Let’s pause here, catch our breath, review where we were when we began, and take note how our financial identity is shifting. We are already more prophetic. Several biblical passages speak to our actions thus far and those yet to come. What we have already done will open our eyes to see in the bible what we might not have seen when we began. In addition, actions that we have yet to take need the guidance of biblical people who have experience in practicing Jubilee economics.

First, let’s look with Jubilee eyes at a woman whose economic act stirred Jesus to boldly declare that she would

be talked about “wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world” (Mark 14:1-9). She chose to pour expensive, imported essence on Jesus to the chagrin of the men around him, his disciples no less! It would have taken them nearly a year’s work to earn the money that the jar of nard cost, and here she was pouring it over Jesus’ head. What about all the poor? What a waste! Stupid thing to do!

But Jesus saw it differently. He saw the woman as a prophet, a seer who saw what the men did not see. He quoted from Deuteronomy 15, a Jubilee passage, giving us a clue that he saw in this moment a woman envisioning systemic change. With his Jubilee eyes, he saw the pouring as an anointing. To him, the woman was like the prophet Samuel pouring oil on David to anoint him king. This costly essence was not to be used merely as charity for the poor, trapped in the dominant economic system of the Temple and Rome. Rather, it was to anoint the one who helped her both see and enter the reign of God, that kin-dom in which the poor and rich were already full participants in the sufficiency of God’s Enough. Furthermore, the anointing, said Jesus, was for his burial following his expected execution at the hands of the Dominant System. His execution would unmask the Powers, with the hope that even the men there would be able to see what this woman in

some measure saw, namely, that Jesus’ way was the way into a new socio-economic arrangement.

No doubt, the men were blinded from this perception because of their privileges, position, and power as men in the patriarchal structures. They were still thinking *charity* within the structure. But the woman, oppressed by those structures, but liberated by Jesus who ignored them, saw what they could not see. She was thinking systemic change, *transformation*. We have much to learn from those oppressed by the Dominant System. It is their wisdom that rises from a deeper source than schooling that we most need.

In reflecting on this story, we are brought face to face with how our investing chooses between charity and transformation. A charity within the structures of the Dominant System, or a transformation of structures toward a Jubilee economy. In the words of Romans 12:2, we act in conformity to the Dominant System, or we act for transformation out of minds attune to Jubilee’s alternative arrangement.

Second, let’s look with Jubilee eyes at a wealthy man, not well-liked in his community, but too wealthy for them not to reckon with him, Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10). His economic act of reinvesting in an alternative economy stirred Jesus to boldly declare that “salvation has

come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham.”

As CEO of the tax-collecting business in a city bustling with intersecting commerce, he felt walled off from any true friendships. Zaccheus heard Jesus’ choice of him as a breakthrough in this estrangement. He thought, “Out of all those whom he would more likely connect with, he has turned his attention on me. It’s great! And it’s terrible!” Clearly, this was not an invitation to high society tea in the ways of the Dominant System. Rather, this was an invitation to relationship with one whom he knew was a leader of a different socio-economic reality. That being so, Zaccheus needed to do what was necessary to receive him into his house. First and foremost, he needed to change his economics. What had seemed impossible before, suddenly became very possible. Even necessary. The emotional and spiritual energy for changing came when the leader of an alternative economy gave him the personal and spiritual offer of a relational encounter he was seeking, but hadn’t found.

Look again at Jesus’ words, “Today salvation has come to this house.” Startling, given the spiritual processes of salvation we typically hear that don’t even touch on economics. This one focuses in economics. But then again, we don’t

hear much about redistribution of wealth either, and certainly not in a way that links it with our salvation.

This story confronts us with whether we invest in the dominant economic system or an alternative one. Redistribution of wealth in the manner of Zaccheus is left untouched by typical church stewardship, counters our government’s use of taxes and subsidies, is unheard at financial seminars, and considers the orthodoxy of economic growth and asset accumulation pervading our world as heresy.

Third, let’s look at another wealthy man who in addition to practicing wealth redistribution practiced de-privatization. Joseph, resident of Cyprus, took steps to practice a Jubilee economy with at least some of his wealth when he sold some land he owned and brought the proceeds to the apostles. He laid the cash at their feet. Interesting picture! Though he’s mentioned by name, he was not the only one doing this (Acts 4:34-37). After the Jewish festival of harvest and renewal of Torah, called Pentecost, the Spirit moved others to similar economic practices. The combination of God raising Jesus from death and pouring out the Holy Spirit brought repentance and conversion to many, readying them for lifestyle change — to live an alternative socio-economic Way.

Pentecost, and we’ve nearly

A Continuum for Jubilee

Especially for People Interested in Jubilee

How to use this continuum -- This investing continuum is a tool for moving from a focus on God's abundant Enough central. It invites us to be prophetic both in our current economic system and in creating an alternative Jubilee Economy (right side). Work with a group (1) ponder how you would arrange the continuum differently (2) how you would move on the continuum to address further the right side (3) how can you move on the continuum to address further the right side (4) how can you move on the continuum to address further the right side (5) how can you move on the continuum to address further the right side (6) how can you move on the continuum to address further the right side (7) how can you move on the continuum to address further the right side (8) how can you move on the continuum to address further the right side (9) how can you move on the continuum to address further the right side

The 9 Steps described in *“Portfolio Prophets: Investing in a Jubilee Economy”*

Steps: 1 2 3 4 5

Maximizing profits

**Commitment to
shareholders only**

**Private wealth
accumulation**

“Free” Trade

**Unlimited Growth
with Investors
Benefits Primary**

ENOUGH

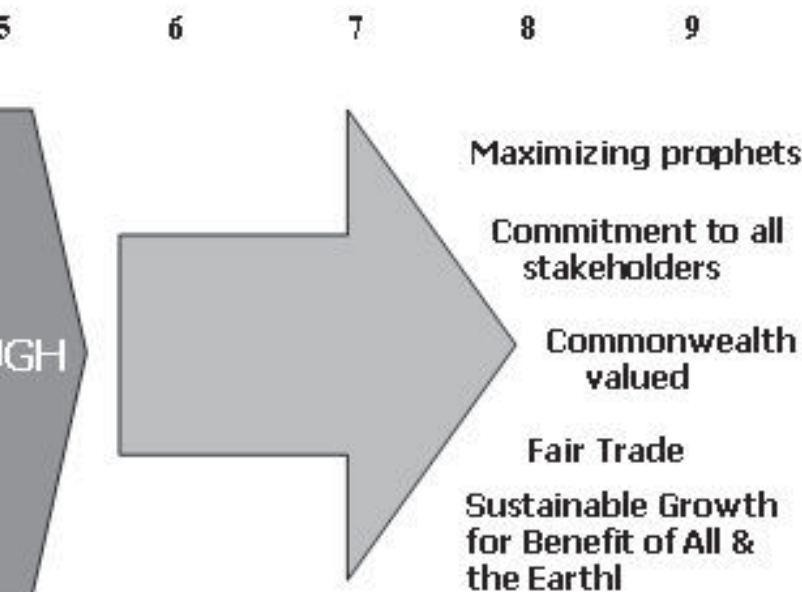
*“Woe to those who add house to house
and join field to field until everything
belongs to them and they are the sole
inhabitants of the land!” -- Isaiah (5:8)*

Jubilee Investing

Investing in a Jubilee Economy

to address the polarization of people into rich and poor. It makes
h by engaging the Dominant Economic System (left side) and by
the continuum, and let it work on you. Revisit it. Personally, and
erently, (2) share together where you are on the continuum, and
ch-poor disparity through investing?

Jubilee Economy” are given approximate locations on the continuum.



“Look, half of my possessions I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” -- Zaccheus (Luke 19:8)

forgotten this, linked Spirit and economics. People moved into a Spirit-filled economic practice of Jubilee, arranging life and resources so that there was not a needy person among them (see Deuteronomy 15:4,7). It was that archetypal economy, deep in the soul of the earth, in their souls and in ours, which at once seems so impossible and yet is the only way that truly is possible. With the Presence of the Spirit poured out, anointing all of them like costly, imported essence, it became possible for them.

So Joseph did it. He used his wealth and his resources of personality and soul so remarkably as he practiced the Jubilee Way that the apostles nicknamed him Barnabas, “son of encouragement.” He would become a teacher of others in the Way. He knew that the Jubilee considered God to be the owner of the land: “the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants” (Leviticus 25:23). And he knew that God brought his ancestors out of the domination of Egypt with the agreement that they were never to enslave or dominate anyone. From that story he knew how when accumulated privatized wealth concentrates in some, others are enslaved. So, his lifestyle choices were clear. He was to live in the sufficiency of God’s abundant Enough. That being so, he deprivatized the rest and made it part of the commonwealth of the community — those joining in the

Jubilee Way.

Finally, let’s look at Isaiah, or probably some prophet of the Isaiah prophetic school, whom we’ll call Isaiah. He grabs our attention especially because Jesus quoted him (Luke 4:16-19) when he emerged from home-life and began his public witness in the Nazareth synagogue. Isaiah’s teaching on how to live a genuine spiritual life took to heart the Sabbath-Jubilee in all of its aspects including the economic (see Isaiah 58 and 61:1-2). The power and perspective to live “a day acceptable to the Lord” (a poetic way of saying “Sabbath”) or “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (a poetic way of saying “Jubilee”), comes from “the spirit of the Lord” being upon us. What do the acceptable day and/or year include? Loosing the bonds of injustice, letting the oppressed go free, bringing good news to the poor, binding up the brokenhearted, proclaiming liberty to captives, and proclaiming release to prisoners.

Isaiah sees discipleship systemically. It isn’t just private, internal religion. Living acceptable to God means arranging our lives to correct the structures dominating and oppressing people’s lives. It means perceiving how the dominant socio-economic structures marginalize people and separate us into hierarchies of those with and those without. And then it means living differently.

So, as we look at our investing, Isaiah insists that we think systematically about how to live acceptable to God. Our reinvesting in a Jubilee economy has the wonderful outcome of announcing good news to the poor and oppressed, and, simultaneously, releasing rich and poor from captivity to the prevailing system.

**Pushing further:
Investing in a Jubilee
Economy — “Good News
for the Poor” and
“Release from Captivity”
for Both Rich and Poor**

Now we are ready to create new structures shaped by Jubilee. These new structures need to be created in a neighborhood that has experienced underinvestment financially. The next steps will be informed by the woman Jesus said would be known worldwide for seeing an alternative Way of hope, by Zaccheus’ redistribution, by Barnabas’ deprivatization into communal commonwealth, and by Isaiah’s awareness that by the Spirit we are empowered to transform socio-economic structures.

Two words of caution: Spirit and relationships. If we rush to manage The Money, we will rush past these two pre-requisites. Without the Spirit of God we will not likely take these steps. We will be too full of the spirit of the Dominant Culture to

do so. And regarding relationships, we now need more than ever to meet with people across economic divisions. We cannot proceed prophetically without the wisdom of the oppressed. The cultural norms regarding the structures that have separated us into a rich-poor apartheid must be disobeyed and transcended in order to do Jubilee. We can *do* Jubilee spirituality and redistribution only if we come together. This, remember, is for our mutual benefit. In a small way we are insisting on living out the new humanity talked about in Ephesians 2:14-22. The point there is that Christ bodily broke down the barriers that keep us strangers and estranged. As the new humanity, we, likewise, put our bodies into connecting what evil keeps disconnected. Flashpoint happens! God enlarges the new humanity.

Can all who want to, take the next steps? Possibly not. Some may be in a chapter of life or a position in the Dominant System that makes so many demands on their time that they cannot give themselves fully to these next steps. At the same time, they may sincerely want to reinvest some of their financial assets into a Jubilee economy structured in this way. Anyone in such a situation is invited to try a modified approach with less time committed to the new group of rich and poor working together to embody Jubilee. But don’t exclude the deprivatizing part (Step 7) and

stay as close as possible to the group working with common knowledge and commonwealth (Step 8). The danger is that anyone following a modified involvement will not undergo the gradual changes that inevitably come to those more immersed in the process. Misunderstandings and control issues can subtly slip in. Be careful that “modified participants” don’t compromise the work of those more deeply immersed.

Moving right along

Step 7 – We now form a special Jubilee investing group – bringing together rich and poor to practice de-privatization for Jubilee.

First, the Jubilee economy is very communitarian. It’s soul depends on a relational infrastructure, not privatized spirituality. So we must practice Sabbath-Jubilee intentionally in our process as well as seek it in our result. Whatever small group we were in during previous steps, now the group must bring together people from different places in the socio-economic spectrum. This is huge and counters the dominant ways of going about investing, doing development, and “helping the poor.” Our coming together pushes us toward mutuality, getting past all the notions that the rich are wiser than the poor and need to be deferred to, if not for wisdom,

then because they have the money. We push past our social habits as well as the systemic structures that keep us apart, seeking the commonality to join us authentically in God’s new humanity. The coming together of Jews and Greeks, described in Ephesians 2:14-22, in bridging their apartheid, is an apt analogy for the coming together of poor and rich. The method there was the physical body of Christ as bridge; likewise, for us communally as Christ’s continuing body, the method is the bridge made by coming together physically, and being an exhibit of the new humanity working together. We are to be deeply what the Dominant System’s rhetoric espouses, but what it actually fears and oppresses, namely, a new humanity living in sustainable patterns of God’s enough.

So pervasive are the structures and habits of apart-ness that the phrase “economic apartheid” is used by Chuck Collins and Felice Yeskel in their book *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and Insecurity* (United for a Fair Economy, published in 2000). Direct contact with the poor and the rich will pierce our recurring stereotypes and bring us to more accurate speech and wiser thought. Portfolio prophets make sure their feet, hands, noses, hearts, ears, and eyes go to be with the people and into the neighborhoods where their money goes. Out of such defiance of the

apartheid governing usual life, prophetic voices are given speech. Even many caught up in the apartheid listen, because an authentic coming together of rich and poor in *relationships of mutuality*, acting together as described in these Steps, gets attention. This is not only different, but exposes much of what the Dominant System does as heresy.

Second, the Sabbath-Jubilee is vigorously democratic. It levels hierarchies and continually finds ways to restore everyone into economic, political, and social participation. This too, we must practice intentionally. Nonetheless, we have to start where we are and bring to consciousness in our group the patterns of hierarchy, separation, and unequal participation implicit in our coming together. Aware of them, we are more likely to practice the Sabbath-Jubilee. For example, some of us bring access to money, others bring access to a neighborhood and its unique culture and dynamics. We need to carefully assess what each of us brings to the group so that we function with a *mutual appreciation* of one another. The temptation is enormous to rate more important those who bring financial assets. Truth is, too often those who bring the finances carry them with the attitude that they also know the solutions. And too often those who need the finances defer to those with them. The biggest foe in Steps 7-9 may well be that those with money

and those without are both captives to the same mindset. Both need the Jubilee experience of being “released from captivity” to the Dominant Culture. Otherwise, Jubilee cannot happen.

An important aside before we implement this Step has to do with the word “biocracy.” I have used the word “democracy” because it is familiar to us, but Jubilee embodies the larger life community, not just human life. Biocracy does this. Cosmologist Brian Swimme uses it in his *Forward* to Thomas Berry’s important book, The Dream of the Earth (Sierra Book Club, 1988, p. xiii). It more accurately expresses Jubilee’s economics as sustaining life in all its diversity, recognizing that nature needs to be at the table in all our decisions about economics and lifestyles. The Dominant System treats natural processes as largely external to economics, hence, the current crises with air pollutants, loss of arable land and topsoil, destruction of rainforests (nature’s respiratory system), desertification, and much more. These real costs are not included in The Market nor most economic calculations. Biocracy is unknown. The Jubilee is a remarkable, very old, and wise alternative. A saving and just corrective.

We now put into practice the communitarian, democratic/biocratic character of this Jubilee investing

group. We form it by deprivatizing what is currently held privately. The rich deprivatize some of the power that keeps them among the have-gots and the poor deprivatize some of the power that has made it possible for them to live as have-nots.

Deprivatizing to create common-wealth — So right up front, all who come from a position of having money need to join the group by putting an amount of personal assets into a common portfolio or group account. This act of deprivatizing wealth and making it the commonwealth of the group is a Barnabas practice of Jubilee, acknowledging, as we've said, that whatever I have beyond Enough is not truly mine. It also implements the Jubilee conviction that assets are the Lord's and cannot be privately owned in the long term; just temporarily (Leviticus 25:23). Then as a group, we practice reinvesting the commonwealth for the transformation of those structures of the Dominant System impacting the neighborhood. We move along the continuum for Jubilee Investing (see centerfold), using strategies agreed upon in the group, including ones suggested here, but not excluding others.

Deprivatizing to create common-knowledge — Just as some join the group by deprivatizing money, others join by deprivatizing knowledge. Those in the group who have

exclusive knowledge of living in a neighborhood ignored or oppressed by the Dominant System need to make it the common knowledge of the group. We need to hear the stories of poor service from government, harassment and abuse from police, the drain and exploitation of Market forces, and all that goes with being the shadow side of what works in favor of those who have. We need to hear how they feel as they watch far more government subsidies going to the people and corporations in the dominant sector than to them even as they revise the rules to "get people off welfare," meaning, of course, the poor, not the rich. These are ways the Dominant System works against them, not for them. People in the neighborhood also bring to the group the essential resource of trustworthiness in the neighborhood. On many issues they are the consultants – a kind of reversal of who consults with whom. Those of us who bring financial resources to the group need to be the listeners and learners about survival in the particular subculture in which together we wish to work toward transformation, be it rural, urban, or foreign.

Through these mutual actions of deprivatizing, we have, in effect, created a new board and a new "venture capital fund." The "board" has come to a sense of the abundance of God's Enough and how to implement that in their work together.

For some, a practical question in this Step may be, “How do we find people from a different place in the economic spectrum that will join with us?” Social agencies, churches that are engaging neighborhoods creatively, and prayer are good sources. The key? Relationships. Discover them. Nurture them. Test them. Create together in the midst of them.

We know we are experiencing Step 7 when we feel good news being announced to the poor and we feel release happening in us from captivity to the Dominant System’s grip on us. When we have a strong sense of relationships, a new Spirit, and the assets of the people, then we are ready to move on. We move in relationship with those who are seers of God’s new order, like the woman who poured costly essence on Jesus.

Step 8 – We, poor and rich together, agree on kinds of development and projects indigenous to the economically underinvested neighborhood – ones that practice Jubilee. After taking time to make money and knowledge common ground, then our process moves on to redeveloping the underinvested neighborhood. Our objective is to work with those in a neighborhood who want to become a life-sustaining community of God’s Enough. The redevelopment we have in mind differs from typical

developers because we want to implement the Jubilee vision, not the Dominant System’s dream. The difference between the two is the heart of this Step. Three differences will illustrate how “development” needs the best attention our poor-rich group can give.

1. Jubilee development empowers everyone for full participation in a redeveloped neighborhood. Most development, driven by non-Jubilee market strategies, typically disempowers and displaces the local, low-income people in the process of upscaling economically. Such “economic cleansing” counters Jubilee.

2. Our model of development partners together so that a Jubilee economy is designed through mutual creation. We do not just transfer resources into the neighborhood or move them from affluent to impoverished so that those who have less can now participate in the Dominant System without themselves coming to see an alternative vision. Rather, we want together to create an alternative system, one expressing the Sabbath-Jubilee. Along with the systemic change, we want our own habits to be regenerated in the process so that the way we live daily regenerates the system. This mutual reinforcement is part of the spirituality of Jubilee. It is God at work within us as we work for such wholistic salvation in

fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12-13). By contrast, most models of development decide what a neighborhood needs from the outside. Rarely is there more than token consultation with the people involved. This kind of hierarchical, imperial thinking is the enemy of Jubilee.

3. Jubilee development focuses on assets in a given region more than problems. The many assets of underinvested neighborhoods are hidden from the eyes of all who don't live there, and even from many who do. The savvy that it takes to live where the Dominant System has abandoned you, and has even become hostile; reveals a remarkable array of assets. These must be uncovered. Otherwise the development will not be indigenous, but imperial; it will not empower or create full-bodied participation. By contrast, most development focuses on the problems, not the assets. Furthermore, the problems are narrowly defined in such a way that money and people who have more of it will be what makes the neighborhood "developed." To counter this prevailing and persistent practice of "development," we must diligently focus in assets and in relationships of mutuality.

As we consider projects, the heart of our analysis and planning must be systemic. We must come to understand causes of the current

reality, most especially how the Dominant System causes underinvested areas and how underinvested areas *cause* wealth accumulation in other areas. The Dominant System's analysis does not acknowledge such a causal relationship, presenting rich and poor as parallel, *acausal* realities. Many analyses about the people and underinvested neighborhoods are wrong, filled with the stereotypes of people from the outside who function with hearts and minds conformed to the Dominant System's hierarchies of who's on top and who's lower down. The cry of the Earth is often lowest of all even though she is the Mother by whom we must all be sustained. Our analysis must include biocracy, the inclusion of all living things, and bio-regions, the interplay of urban and rural in life-sustaining patterns. Jubilee reinvesting requires this kind of more inclusive, wholistic, and, therefore, more accurate analysis. If the more prophetic analysis that we need does not pulse through our practice, then the development that transforms will elude us, and we will not create the Jubilee alternative to which we aspire. Our portfolios will become false prophets, co-opted by profits.

Vehicles for our work include micro-loans, Community Development Loan Funds, and Community Development Credit Unions. Models for these already exist. Other vehicles can be created such as

intergenerational loans, making available money gathered over many years of life to a generation at the vulnerable beginning stage. All of these instruments serve the purpose of giving access to capital to those for whom it is inaccessible in conventional ways. Most banks and lenders aren't interested in working with these people because the amounts are so small or because the persons cannot establish their credit-worthiness in common ways.

If possible, our Jubilee investing group wants to know personally those who need a micro-loan for their micro-enterprise. We want to work with residents on creating a loan fund or a credit union. If we have difficulty moving into relationships to make these work, then a social agency or church working in community development will already be in such relationships. So we work in solidarity with these local actors.

Interest issues come up for us also. Do we charge interest at all? Especially on assets that exceed Enough? Probably not. For centuries Christians avoided interest charges. Some Muslim and Christian groups continue that practice even today. Sometimes interest is turned into other ways of serving the people of the neighborhood, rather than to serve those who first invested the money. Mostly, interest functions to make money off of our money, not our

work. How do we feel about that? When we remember how servicing a debt moves money from those with less to those with more, we see why Jubilee cancels debt every seven years. Interest and debt dangerously undercut community dynamics when our Jubilee objective is doggedly, gracefully determined to keep everyone participating in the economy of the community.

We may want to see a Worker Center where workers learn their rights, support each other in filing complaints, and organize to improve their work options. Supporting local living wage ordinances can be organized from such a Center. Another important component is a Fair Trade and Food Center. Here people learn that, contrary to common knowledge, there is an alternative to products available through "Free" Trade agreements. Trade today is actually not "free" but highly managed by the top 1-5% — executives in global corporations working with government elites to their advantage and to the disadvantage of the environment and workers lower in the socio-economic hierarchy. Food sources can also regenerate a neighborhood as people learn alternatives to those provided by half a dozen major transnational food corporations. Organic food clubs, links with Community Supported Agriculture farms, and the formation of community gardens are proven strategies to revitalize

neighborhoods. Housing needs can be addressed, including people living in community for economic affordability and for support in life-sustaining choices implementing Jubilee.

Whatever we do must bring rich and poor together in a world structured to keep us apart. This is prophetic work. It connects us with people, land, and places from which we have been disconnected. This connecting then prepares the way for us together to create a practice of Jubilee spirituality that benefits us both, those with more and those with less.

Through these relationships a new humanity evolves, one that brings together what the Dominant System keeps apart, whether by accident or purpose. Direct contact between people with financial assets, but with little knowledge of how to do life in underinvested neighborhoods, and people with lots of knowledge about their neighborhood but little access to financial resources, benefits both at a personal level. Through attentive listening and learning, trust and effort, we create projects that can make a difference at a systemic level as well.

Step 9 – Our group implements strategies for continuing the practice of a Jubilee economy in our lives and in the neighborhood.
Ongoing training in Jubilee

community and economics will need to be available. Churches can serve their people well by setting up a School of Jubilee Economics. Jubilee Economics Ministries has a curriculum design and pedagogical process to assist (see “Companions for Portfolio Profits” on the final page). As people want to participate in what’s happening, they need the chance to be welcomed into the new vision. *Because this vision is so counter to the media, schools, advertising, movies, much of the internet, and most forces that educate us, we must offer an alternative education or the vision will soon be lost.* The Dominant System relentlessly, and with great financial backing, undercuts alternatives – especially ones that work. Lone prophetic voices are silenced. A neighborhood acting in prophetic lifestyles with decentralized leadership creates the Jubilee alternative that portfolio prophets seek. It appears to be the most difficult for the Dominant System to co-opt.

An excellent means of training is to repeat Steps 1 to 8 with other people. This brings together once again people being kept apart by life’s “normal” routines and hierarchies. Training others in the Steps reinforces powerfully one’s own practice of them.

We intend to sustain an alternative, non-dominating economy in the lifestyles and structures of the

neighborhood. But the economic environment is not benign. The Dominant System's politicians, developers, and entrepreneurs all seek advantage. Whatever is successful in the alternative economy will be the object of their interest. They will seek to co-opt it and in whatever way they can take advantage of it. Very quickly the alternative can be subverted. Seductions abound. We need cells of resistance and centers for alternatives.

In recognition of this context, advocates of a Jubilee economy need to return again and again to their reality of resisting hierarchies, leveling them repeatedly, making ways for everyone to be economic participants, and valuing community over wealth accumulation. Anything less is not Jubilee.

In Conclusion

Looking back to where we began, it is apparent that we were further away from the bible in our practice than we knew. Portfolio prophets enter into a spiritual-economic process of bringing our lives closer to God's intent for us.

Our portfolios speak differently from when we began. Many will have taken notice of their different message, indeed "good news for the poor" and "release to the captives."

In an aside, they may well say to us, "Thank you for getting some of me delivered where I belong. I felt orphaned and cut off from those whom I'm to be related to and to serve. Thanks for listening."

Many of the Steps can be repeated as part of an ongoing process. The Jubilee has great power to continually change our minds and our lifestyles, i.e., to bring us along a path of repenting, transcending to new thinking, and of converting, turning away from what is not sustaining life to that which is.

In case we've forgotten, our churches, church colleges, and religious organizations need to take many of these Steps. Our religious institutions need to know that we expect them to be portfolio prophets. We expect them to show leadership in the strategies and the will to invest in a Jubilee economy. When our money talks we want it to speak the words of Jesus, not the words of Mammon.

Our paradigm and power for transformation is the ancient wisdom of the biblical Jubilee. Though Jubilee is ignored by most teachers of the bible, and misappropriated often by churches to name special celebrative years or campaigns without implementing a Jubilee economy, it is at the heart of the reading and practice of the gospel for "Portfolio Prophets." The economic component and context of

the Gospel, if ignored, reduces the Gospel from what Jesus lived.

Often Jubilee is dismissed by saying, “Well, it was never really practiced anyway.” But, in truth, Jubilee has been widely practiced. It has been practiced for centuries with varying degrees of faithfulness by peoples countering whatever system was dominating them at the time. The traditional ways of indigenous peoples stand out in this respect and have much to offer us. Jubilee is a model for all who desire to practice non-dominating patterns of life. We know so little about the practice of Jubilee because our historical studies, anthropological studies, and information sources come from those who dominate history and life. To look at the world from the perspective of the dominated will reveal that Jubilee, rather than having never been really practiced, has been the life-sustaining, biocratic pattern of their practice.

In particular, the Jubilee theme that restores assets to people undergirds portfolio prophets. The Jubilee is clear that in the seventh year debts are to be canceled. Accordingly, portfolio prophets do not seek long-term debt arrangements and are careful not to engage in debt-servicing that benefits those who already have Enough. During the Jubilee Year, the 50th year, everyone is to return to their ancestral land. Since our economy today is less land-

based, but highly asset-based, the returning of assets to whom they rightfully belong is our prophetic work.

Portfolio prophets prove anew the transforming power of the gospel. The proof is what happens to us, to our faith-based institutions, to our relationships with people and Mother Earth, and to our engagement with the Powers that arrange economics in the world. So, we persist in transforming portfolios, which, in turn, transform.

Contact information:

Jubilee Economics Ministries
4750 N. Sheridan Rd, Ste 429
Chicago, IL 60640
www.jubilee4justice.org

or

3295 Meade Avenue
San Diego, CA., 92116
619-528-8075
jemsandiego@yahoo.com



Postscript: Facilitating Portfolio Prophet Conversations

Jubilee Economics Ministries (JEM) recommends that Portfolio Prophets be used in groups. The challenges of shifting our investing into a Jubilee economy are daunting. Yet, when one group participant is able to take a next step, all other group members feel empowered to take a next step as well. JEM will be happy to have a conversation with anyone about their group, suggesting ways for the process to move toward transformation.

The following topics for conversations, classes, teach-ins, and retreats evolve from this booklet, and, in several cases go beyond it. For each topic JEM can offer resources or leadership.

- Reading the bible with “economic eyes.”
- Saying “enough” in a land shouting “more.”
- Lifestyle integrity for all who create prophetic portfolios.
- The assumptions under-girding our respective investing strategies.
- The power and practice of spirituality in Jubilee investing.
- How systemic realities and personal discipleship impact each other.
- The hope-filled alternatives Jubilee brings.
- Jubilee as a framework for investing for personal and social transformation.

We look forward to hearing from you as you practice Jubilee investing.

Companions for Portfolio Prophets

Jubilee Economics Ministries — Formed in 1999, JEM practices the ancient wisdom of the biblical Sabbath-Jubilee in the current economic reality. Sabbath-Jubilee critiques the current global arrangements and offers an alternative for all willing to practice it. JEM stands ready to facilitate the process for people wanting to become portfolio prophets, including systemic awareness, reading the bible with “economic eyes,” and lifestyle changes. Visit us at www.jubilee4justice.org.

Collins, Chuck and Felice Yeskel, Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and Insecurity, 2000 (United for a Fair Economy)

In addition to their analysis of the apartheid, they offer many suggestions for social transformation relevant to Steps 7-9 in “Portfolio Prophets.”

Collins, Chuck and Pam Rogers with Joan P. Garner, Robin Hood Was Right: A Guide to Giving Your Money for Social Change, 2000 (W.W. Norton and Company)

This covers investing as well as giving, though the title doesn’t indicate it. It comes out of the Boston group United for a Fair Economy noted for excellent analysis regarding the rich-poor gap. Working with many people of great wealth as well as those of modest affluence, they consider concentrated wealth in the hands of a few to be a threat to democracy. Their advocacy is marked by humor and results.

Coop America’s Financial Planning Handbook is a great guide for Steps 1-4. It and other Coop America resources are available from 1612 K St. NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006, 202-872-5307, www.coopamerica.org

Kinsler, Ross and Gloria, The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life, 1999 (Orbis)

A readable presentation of the Sabbath-Jubilee as found in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Gospels. The socio-economic context and content, then and now, are front and center throughout. The Jubilee is understood as an alternative to what dominant systems do.

Companions *(continued)*

Myers, Ched, [The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics](#), 2001, offers great help in reading the bible economically. This small book is available through www.bcm-net.org

Responsible Wealth — A group of people in the top 5% of U.S. wealth who work against laws and structures that concentrate wealth. They have been organized by United for a Fair Economy. Their publications and newsletters are important companions for portfolio prophets. A visit to the United for a Fair Economy website will link you to theirs as well. Visit www.ufenet.org.

Sabbath Economics Collaborative, www.sabbatheconomics.org, offers information, resources, speakers, and a membership of biblical scholars capable of reading the bible economically, popular educators for economic literacy, and practitioners who address alternative economics in practical ways.

“The full power of social investing will not be realized until we learn to invest in ways that transfer economic power away from multinational corporations and into the hands of local communities.

... Successful community-based business models exist, but they do not follow the rules of the market. ... These models affirm that security, happiness, and true wealth are found not in money but in relationships built upon trust, reciprocity, and sharing.”

— Scott Klinger in *The Other Side* magazine, May-June 1999

“We learn, when we respect the dignity of people, that they cannot be denied the elementary right to participate fully in the solutions to their own problems. Self-respect arises only out of people who play an active role in solving their own crises and who are not helpless, passive, puppet-like recipients of private or public services. To give people help, while denying them a significant part in the action, contributes nothing to the development of the individual. In the deepest sense it is not giving, but taking – taking their dignity. Denial of the opportunity for participation is the denial of human dignity and democracy.”

— Saul Alinsky in *Rules for Radicals*, New York: Random House, 1971, p. 123

