

**RIGHT OR WRONG - THERE ARE ASSUMPTIONS**

What is the effect of globalization on our congregations? Without a major survey, I don't know for sure. The topic is so broad that it risks shallowness. A broad river runs shallow and in the narrows it runs deep. I have narrowed the focus by selecting specific targets. My thinking in this paper is coloured by several assumptions:

- Unitarian Universalists are no less or more to be criticized than any other churches - as you will see.
- We live in a world which is terribly seductive and filled with multiple modes of comfort food. Seduced and comforted (from actual food to material goods) we often fail to do the work required to meet the negative challenges of globalization. Such is the culture which shapes us.
- Many Unitarian Universalists believe that changing behaviour, one person at a time, can make a difference. I believe in changing people one at a time, sometimes in larger numbers, but I do not think that is enough. I believe we have to do what we possibly can to change the large forces too.
- A lack of rigorous application of our principles leads us in the wrong direction. I have made some further assumptions:
  - Unitarian Universalists know how to work with governments.
  - Unitarian Universalists like working with governments.
  - Too many Unitarian Universalists have not a clue about how to work with business.
  - Too many Unitarian Universalists dislike/distrust business.
- As a group of people, we fail to practice a character trait which is fundamental to our principles and purposes - the search for truth and meaning. We love meaning. The search for truth is the hard part. Without the curiosity, the thirst for understanding, we are likely only to arrive half way or less in achieving many of our goals. Friedman, in *The World is Flat*, noted a friend's lament about students he had taught:

“Of the students I taught over six semesters, I'd only consider hiring two of them. The rest lacked the creativity, problem solving abilities and a passion for learning.”  
(Friedman, P. 261)

Without curiosity, we allow ourselves to shy away from what is difficult and uncomfortable. We wince and accept impotence as though it were inevitable as we let our dislike and ignorance lead

us.

When it comes to globalization, let me offer three examples to illustrate what I have said in the last two paragraphs. These examples constitute the bulk of this paper.

- First, it is about what we choose to learn - to read - to experience . . . or rather . . . it is about what we ignore. This is the bulk of this paper.
- Second, it is about our relationship to green investing.
- Third, and most damning, it is about the lack of interest amongst UU's in following the influence trail to gain a more complete understanding of the large forces in the world. As we shall see, ministers, leaders in congregational culture, are ill prepared for such work.

Let us begin.

### **IT IS ABOUT WHAT WE CHOOSE - TO READ - TO LEARN - TO EXPERIENCE**

It is about what we choose - to read - to learn - to experience . . . *rather* . . . it is about what we ignore.

Do you remember Ferdinand Braudel, Structures of Everyday Life in the Middle Ages? An exhaustive and exhausting tomb. How many times in this group have we made fun of that book.

That book was followed by another Braudel tomb, Commerce in the Middle Ages. I bought the book and read it. It was slow reading but the two combined gave me a deeper understanding of the relationship between identity and work.

In the first centuries of Capitalism, work was a vocation which gave life meaning. Everyone was a valued cog in the wheel. (Have you ever experienced a gear missing a cog?) The blacksmith, the baker, the cartwright, the cobbler, the carpenter, the soldier, the mother and homemaker - all fit into the world in a meaningful way. Today meaning is under attack. Vocations have given way to jobs which are disposable stepping stones. Power, money, material, beauty - our culture has us stepping into the shallows of life and we are in danger of running aground. When this happens our lives become about barter power - gaining the chips which can be traded for the ultimate prize.

I asked a teenager recently, "What do you want out of life." The answer astounded me. "I want money." "Why," I asked. "So I can buy a big house and have several BMW's in the three car garage." I know that I winced and wrinkled up my nose as I asked, "Why?" "So I can get a beautiful wife." What is this about? Globalization's materialism has its fingers in here. When American materialism is exported - and embraced - this is the result. When a juggernaut distracts us and we are drawn in by it's scent as the sailors of old were by the singing of the Sirens - we are

near foundering on rocks. When the focus is on the shallows we lose touch with what happens to us! This teen made a commodity out of the beautiful wife, something which could be bought with accumulated accouterments.

I find it in our ministry - not so much when I am amongst good friends, as many of you have become. I find it at GA, district meetings, even Ministry Days. Power, size, outgoing and quick to speak with authority, we are infested with barriers which make us distant and uncomfortable. Many years ago a movement turned Directors of Religious Education into Ministers of Religious Education. It was designed to climb the battlements of the old boy network and level the playing field. The divides later became budget, church size, building programs and visibility, and women, too, were included in the upper ranks. These are now giving way to political correctness and right relations. Most of these things are important, but not when they forge blinders and create barriers. They create meaning structures and exclusion. What happens in a group when one bruised ego says, "I feel that we are not in right relation."

In my first of two surveys for this paper, I have spoken with three past presidents of the UUMA and asked how they dealt with these structures of meaning and exclusion. Each implied that they had to be present in a different way for different ministers and minister's groups. I asked about identity - "Does this not create separate and distinct perceptions of the UUMA and its President?" One had a cogent answer, "Yes. I guess so. But that is just the wages we pay for being human - it is our sociology and has been throughout history." Perhaps it is just post modern or maybe it is the secret of sanguinity!

***You may ask what this has to do with Globalization.*** It is just this : . . the games we play determine what we see. In other words, the culture determines the extent of our blinders. The blinders on a horse are there to limit sight so that the horse will not be frightened by quick movements in the area of peripheral vision. Our blinders, built of smugness fear, pride and shame can also limit vision.

Whether we are traditionalists, boomers, Gen X or Gen Y - we are limited. One limitation which I find running through all generations in our ministry is an aversion to learning about business and how to work within its structures. I believe we have lost a big part of what should be our identity and thus we are crippled when it comes to finding effective ways to work with important globalization issues. We seek to influence government. We have little experience and knowledge about influencing business. Our core values do not even mention business. It is no wonder, as Jared Diamond writes, "It is painfully difficult to decide whether to abandon some of one's core values when they seem to be incompatible with survival." (Diamond, P. 433)

While Globalization may be about the environment, human rights, and culture, it is more about money and how it is to flow from place to place. We can not make effective and lasting change unless we are part of the machine which directs the flow of money.

Taking care of that flow of money is my wife's vocation. She is Director of Internal Audit for the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation. One month ago she was leading workshops in Malaysia for the annual meeting of the International Association of Internal Auditors, teaching bankers from developing nations about risk assessment. Building a trustworthy international banking system is part of her work, helping money to flow easily. It helps business which creates jobs in developing nations, thus lifting the standard of living - more schools, hospitals, universities, less poverty. Globalization.

Perhaps one reason that Unitarians seem to not want to become part of the process which directs the flow of money is found in Lord Acton's Dictum. Lord Acton was a historian and a staunch and influential Catholic. He opposed the vote, in 1870 by the college of Cardinals, to give the Pope "Infallibility." Once the deed was done, he wrote to Bishop Mandell Creighton in an 1887 letter saying, "Power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely." (ACTON INSTITUTE, acton.org) I think that most UU's I know are at the "tends to corrupt" stage when thinking about business. Most of my anti-globalization social activist friends are Unitarian. They tend to believe that at the helm of most global corporations lies a person with absolute power - who is absolutely corrupt. I do not agree with them.

Unfortunately Michael Moore, whose works I applaud regardless of errors in facts here and there, has popularized the idea that there are very powerful people running the world and they are evil. I tend to believe that evil is only created by people's beliefs, it does not really exist. When we accord something with the status of evil - we tend to give up the fight - EVIL is too big for mere mortals. Rather than evil, I just think that there are some people out there wielding large amounts of power who are greedy, dogmatic, misguided and dangerous. I can deal with that. If all we believe in is Michael Moore, we have lost at least half of the truth. The meaning we make is only partial.

Philip Slater wrote of what happens when a country loses its identity, becomes vapid and empty of meaning:

"Power addicts never seem to learn from experience. Apparently they just like to pile up dead bodies to prove they're men. And to fill their inner emptiness. Little men who are dead inside find their only satisfaction in their ability to inflict suffering on multitudes. But no matter how high the bodies pile up, they'll never fill that inner void."(Philip Slater, Huffington Post, November 21, 2006)

Certainly some power brokers are so morally empty as to fit Slater's description - Darth Vader in any guise certainly is!

Morris Berman provides insights in his otherwise overreaching assumptions about the immanent

fall of America from God's grace. In his latest attack on American culture, *Dark Ages America: The Final Phase of Empire*, he speaks again and again of the United States as belligerent, saddled with huge deficits, a hollowed-out economy, vulnerable to terrorist blowback and collapse when foreign creditors pull the plug. He says the rot is not just economic, it is also cultural and spiritual:

Americans are alienated shopaholics immured in suburban anomie, encased in a private bubble of iTunes and media noise and indifferent to the public good. Culprits include globalization, technology and, more fundamentally, the individualism and commercialism that is the bedrock of American identity. (Publisher's Weekly, April 2006.)

Unitarian Universalists are not immune to the culture in which they live. We all fall prey to its talons and our scarred hearts reflect the assault on decent human lives. Existentially, it is hard to know that life is worthwhile, that we are indeed - ALIVE - while living in this culture. While Forrest Church intimates that it is difficult to live when we know we are to die, I submit that it is difficult to live with meaning so thin and vapid. Meaning overcomes the threat of death. As November 11<sup>th</sup> nears I am aware again of the Canadians who gave their lives at Vimy Ridge, Ypres, Passchendaele, and Beaumont Hamel in WW I. They died by the thousands, nay tens of thousands - all Newfoundland soldiers wiped from the face of the earth - and willingly so, because there was meaning in what they were trying to do. Martin Luther King risked death daily because there was meaning in what he did.

Globalization has the power to rob us of meaning. A trivial example: A friend attending a geology conference in Cairo, Egypt, wanted to bring some Egyptian handicrafts back for his children. Search as he could, there were none. Everything he wanted - pyramids, the Sphinx - all made in . . . China.

“Goreology” wins the Emmy and the Nobel Prize. We still seek a remedy in what is familiar - government - rather than move to the core. We seek a change in laws and regulations in a venue overly indebted to business, as we try to change business. We do not notice the conundrum or folly in such adventure. How can we partner with business? The very first step is to overcome our prejudice.

The Oxford Dictionary offers a simple definition of prejudice: (1): preconceived judgment or opinion (2): an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge . . . often in disregard of one's rights; *especially* : detriment to one's legal rights.”

To many UUs, business is a distrusted even scurrilous and sometimes hated group - powerful, ruthless, interested only in profit, operating outside the law whenever possible, and the list of

petty complaints can go on. I have heard them all voiced by UUs. To avoid bigotry - there are also business savvy and appreciative Unitarians but they are not shrill in defending their truth - as those prejudiced against business can be.

Just as we use law to determine racial prejudice, let us turn to law to see what it has to say about the relationship between people and business under the law . . .

David Korten wrote in THE POST CORPORATE WORLD the following review of the importance of an 1886 appellate court decision:

In 1886, . . . in the case of Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that a private corporation is a person and entitled to the legal rights and protections the Constitution affords to any person.

Far more remarkable, however, is that the doctrine of corporate personhood, which subsequently became a cornerstone of corporate law, was introduced into this 1886 decision without argument. According to the official case record, Supreme Court Justice Morrison Remick Waite simply pronounced before the beginning of argument in the case of Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company that. . .

The court does not wish to hear argument on the question whether the provision in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, applies to these corporations. We are all of opinion that it does.

The court reporter duly entered into the summary record of the Court's findings that:

The defendant Corporations are persons within the intent of the clause in section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Thus it was that a two-sentence assertion by a single judge elevated corporations to the status of persons under the law and prepared the way for the rise of global corporate rule, and thereby changed the course of history.

The doctrine of corporate personhood creates an interesting legal contradiction. The corporation is owned by its shareholders and is therefore their property. If it is also a legal person, then it is a person owned by others and thus exists in a condition of slavery -- a status explicitly forbidden by the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. So is a corporation a person illegally held in servitude by its shareholders? Or is it a person who enjoys the rights of personhood that take precedence over the presumed ownership rights of its shareholders(David Korten, The Post

Corporate World, p.185-6)

If it were not for this topic would you be reading the assigned books? Why are we not studying hard all the ruinous literature which guides the captains of industry in their decisions? Perhaps because we do not even know what they read - and why would that be so . . . Why?

I have spoken with a dozen graduates of Harvard Divinity School, Meadville Lombard Theological School, Starr King School for the Ministry and Vancouver School of Theology. None of them could answer fundamental questions like these:

- Can you name any specific ecological issues which can be traced back to the NAFTA agreement? *Too many answered the equivalent of, "I do not know details of stuff like that."*
- Do you know the difference between a corporation and a person under the U.S. Constitution? *Most answered, "What?"*
- Has Business or Government been most responsible for the spread of wealth in the world? *Most frequent answer, "Is this a trick question?"*

I will be the first to admit that it can be boring and confusing to keep up with something like NAFTA or GATT tribunal decisions. Two examples of decisions under NAFTA show the appalling lack of consistency in the International Tribunals, a lack of consistency which is so confusing that most people just give up!

On August 9, 1999, a NAFTA arbitration tribunal tossed out a \$970 million claim filed by Methanex, a Canadian methanol producer who had challenged California's regulation of the gasoline additive MTBE, methyl tertiary butyl ether.

Because MTBE contaminates drinking water, California banned its use in California gasoline. Canada's Methanex Corp. argued that California's ban was a violation of NAFTA's investment protections.

A three-member NAFTA tribunal unanimously dismissed the claim and awarded the United States \$4 million to cover legal costs.

In a statement issued August 10, 1999, U.S. State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said the ruling demonstrates that U.S. trade agreements and investment treaties "do not encroach on governments' legitimate right to regulate in the public interest."

He added: "The decision represents a vindication of the prerogative of states to take action to protect public health and the environment without running afoul of the investment protection provisions of international trade agreements and investment treaties."

(U.S. Dept. Of State release: <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english>)

&y=2005&m=August&x=20050811133827ASrelliM0.6663172, August 2005)

Now, listen to this . . . written in 1998, “A banned gasoline additive containing the neurotoxin manganese was ordered back into Canadian gas tanks following a multi-million dollar settlement between the Canadian government and US-based Ethyl Corporation, manufacturer of the controversial additive MMT.

Canada banned the inter-provincial trade and transportation of MMT in 1996 amid fears that the manganese contained in the octane enhancer could cause memory impairment, tremors and in extreme cases, psychosis similar to that caused by Parkinson's Disease. Ethyl responded to the ban by using the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to sue Canada for a more than quarter of a billion dollars - the amount Ethyl said the ban cost them in lost profits and damage to their reputation.

The \$350 million suit drew international attention because it marked the first time a corporation had used free-trade agreement to directly sue a national government. In the suit, Ethyl used Chapter 11 of the NAFTA, which allows corporations to sue a government for compensation if that government passes a law that harms a corporation's profits or reputation.

Aside from paying \$13 million (U.S.) in damages to Ethyl, the Canadian government agreed as a part of the settlement to allow MMT back into the Canadian market and to issue a statement saying that the additive poses no health threat. (Jeremy Nelson, *The Peak: Simon Fraser University's Student Newspaper*, Issue 1, Volume 100, September 8, 1988)

Go figure! All I can say is that our legal systems are based on English Common law which is informed by precedent. In the case of global treaties, there is such scant precedent for the types of claims and issues being brought to court that there is bound to be disagreement, inconsistency, and confusion until such time as there is a significant body of law on which to draw. Over time fairness will develop and become accepted . . . meanwhile, one must hope as well as be vigilant.

The issues are complicated. When asked “What happens when a country that has poor employment practices wants to sell its goods at a competitive rate in the United States.” Most of the students polled answered that we should not accept its goods. There was little knowledge of the NAFTA and GATT judicial systems which, in all but the worst cases, would lead to importation of low priced wares forcing our businesses either to shed benefits (there has been a huge loss of benefits by American and Canadian workers as a result of global trade agreements), lower wages or export manufacturing jobs overseas (manufacturing jobs have fled North America for the cheaper labour markets in the Orient). As a further example, the only way to remove lead paint from toys made in China is to stop buying them! Mattel knows this and has gone back to the Chinese manufactures and down side suppliers to excise the problem. China's answer was execute the former head of their equivalent to the food and Drug Administration, Zheng Xiaoyu, and a supplier of lead paint, Zhang Shuhong, commits suicide. Globalization does not standardize

everything!

When asked, "Can you name any fast track trade issues which have gone before President Bush this year?" Most students had heard of fast track but admitted that they hardly ever read any business news. When asked how they would find out about such news they answered, ". . . usually from social activists or front page headlines in mainstream news sources." Only a few regularly read alternative news on a daily basis. Several did not know of any alternative news or they did not have time to keep up on this. Not one knew of the plight facing Peru.

This month (I write just after the House passed the Peru FTA bill) Peru may become part of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Peru's experiment in sharing its retirement insurance program with businesses has failed miserably. Under NAFTA CitiCorp will be able to sue for lost profits should the program be nationalized. That will bankrupt Peru. Some demonic provisions in the NAFTA agreement are supported by some very powerful-greedy-stupid-dangerous people.

With this lack of knowledge demonstrated by our students - anomie, apathy and ignorance seem to lead us when it comes to global justice issues devolving from global trade agreements. Perhaps, or is it just being overwhelmed by the fractured postmodern life and a lack of willingness to or knowledge how to live a life based on principle. I believe it is untenable for our students to graduate knowing so little about globalization and business. We are part of the problem which allows Global trade treaties to continue to proliferate their bad sections (NAFTA Chapter 11 - for example) in a big way - "We" means UU ministers!

Are we alone? No. Max Stackhouse wrote:

In a report presented to the Globalization task Force (ATS) in October 1999, Judith Berling . . . reported on the relative success of the member schools in implementing programs related to globalization. A very high percentage (90 percent) of faculty, student, and administrators affirmed in interviews that their institutions were involved in a world church community, but that *the training of students on global issues was only "somewhat evident."* The most striking finding for purposes of our project, however, was the response - the most negative of the study - to whether "students (are being) educated in the economic/social factors of ministry in a globalized world." (Stackhouse, Max, editor, "God and Globalization Vol. 1"(Trinity Press, 2000) p. 20-30.)

*When given a list of items related to globalization and asked to rank them in importance, "expansion of Western culture throughout the globe" was ranked as the least important.* (Max Stackhouse, Theological Education, ATS, Spring 1999)

I shake my head in disbelief. While this was a 1999 survey and may be discounted on that basis - that was the year of the WTO demonstrations in Seattle and the lead up to the 2001 FTAA protests in Quebec. Why would people not understand the issues with all the headlines during

those years? Understanding is likely to be even lower today because there is less news about global trade agreements. We have to be on special list serves or dig for the news.

Stackhouse went on to quote Berling:

. . . ATS schools distance themselves from the Western capitalistic juggernaut sometimes identified with globalization . . .(Loc. Cit.)

Stackhouse adds:

. . . the result likely reveals both an unwillingness of much Christian leadership to take responsibility for aspects of social life which the tradition has helped generate and sustain, and a profound uncertainty as to how, theologically and ethically, the current social and economic dynamics should be understood and guided. (Loc. Cit.)

While I understand that academics like to be guided by certainty, there is little that has ever been declared certain that has been right forever. Sometime when the stakes are so high we have to dig our heels in and take a risk - always willing to alter our path as we get more information. To hunker down in academia's theoretics and never take a stand is surely shabby and shameful on both moral and ethical grounds.

Ok - that was a short diatribe and you understand why I am so judgmental about what we read and do not read - we fail to educate ourselves enough to understand the single greatest force affecting culture, ecology, war, etc., around the globe. Max Stackhouse "argues that the force of global realities required ministers (ordained and lay) to understand the role of religion in providing a value base and compass for society." He argues that an important component of equipping ministers would be an understanding of and dialog with the various professions /vocations that are both shaping and shaped by globalizing forces of the world. (Aleshire, Danile, "Editor's Introduction", Theological Education, Volume 32, Number 5, Spring 1999, p. 141.)

The forced reading we share as a result of Greenfield Group's selection of this topic can affect the local culture of many congregations in so far as we, the ministers, share the challenges to our thinking, the places where we found our knowledge wanting, and display a thirst for learning how to work with business within our congregations.

### THE ART AND PRACTICE OF GREEN INVESTING

The next focus is on an understanding of what *green investing* is and what our practice says about us.

Here I focus on five ways of defining green investing. They share one criterion: by investing green, it is possible to have an impact on our carbon footprint on the planet. I have chosen carbon

footprint as the determining criterion because it has the largest trickle down effect - lowering carbon footprint's impact on manufacturing, transportation, water quality, air quality, distribution of manufacturing around the globe, agriculture, forestry, and the list can go on.

Vigilance is required when listening to claims about green investing. For instance, why not invest in bio-diesel? Invest in ethanol? Sounds good but both fuels, lacking the BTU's per unit that sheer gasoline or straight diesel have, lower the mileage of your car by a significant amount. In the case of ethanol gas, current averages are about 20% to 30% less gas mileage - so you use more ethanol gas to drive this year the same number of miles you drove last year! The real carbon savings is less than 3% but that does not take into account the increase in environmental carbon from ethanol production over gas production. (U.S. Department of Energy, <http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/flextech.shtml>)

Let me get stuck here for a moment. Corn is the crop of choice in North America for producing ethanol. Corn is a poor source for the sugars required. Ethanol in Brazil, where most cars run on ethanol, is made from sugar cane (can not be grown in the US due to climate) which produces much more high-grade ethanol than corn. (See Wald, Matthew, "Is Ethanol for the Long Haul?", *Scientific American*, January 2007, p. 42) Why use corn? For generations the U.S. government has paid farmers to not plant corn on their fields due to overproduction. Now those payments cease, offering lawmakers a hidden bonus for their pork barrel gifts to constituents. (Yes - I am cynical!)

Dr. Michael Grabowski, a professor at the Colorado School of Mines, in a study commissioned by the National Corn Growers Association (U.S.) found that "the total fossil energy input to corn accounts for about one-third of the total fossil energy in ethanol. In corn agriculture, fertilizers, particularly nitrogen, account for more than 40% of the total energy input per acre of corn harvested. The US fertilizer industry trade group has recently reported the aggregated energy input for US fertilizer manufacture. The input is consistent with data reported by EU countries that indicates that the US industry average and the EU average energy input per pound of nitrogen produced are essentially the same. Farm fuels including diesel, gasoline, LPG, natural gas and electricity make up almost 50% of the energy inputs." (Michael Grabowski, *Fossil Energy Use in the Manufacture of Corn Ethanol*, August 2002, [http://www.ncga.com/ethanol/pdfs/energy\\_balance\\_report\\_final\\_R1.PDF](http://www.ncga.com/ethanol/pdfs/energy_balance_report_final_R1.PDF).)

When the carbon cost of growing corn and creating ethanol is added up and compared with the carbon footprint of regular gas - it makes little sense to use ethanol as the carbon footprint savings are negligible - less than 3%. Well, 3% is 3% and every bit helps. However . . .

The US Department of Energy indicates that 15% of the energy we use in a car is used to move your car or run useful accessories. The best way to conserve gas is NOT TO IDLE. Idling uses 17.2% of the energy burned in a car's engine! So why produce ethanol - why not ban idling? (United States Department of Energy, <http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/atv.shtml>)

All this detail is simply to point out that investment requires research if you want to make a real difference when it comes to carbon footprint on the Earth. Defining “green” is not easy - you have to do the math.

Here are five possible ways to invest green, potentially lowering the carbon footprint:

- Invest in one of the socially and environmentally screened opportunities in the UUA retirement funds with Fidelity.
- Invest in dirty companies you want to change and organize votes of stock options.
- Use your money to build wind towers for electrical generation which feeds into the local grid.
- Get in on the ground floor and set up a venture capital group and use its funds to support a range of companies which meet your specific green goals including toxic cleanups.
- Invest in atomic power generation because the problems it causes are further down the pike and actually cut the carbon footprint per kilowatt of electricity produced.

Under no circumstances am I going to take the time to compare these alternatives against each other seeking the best. I would rather simply identify the worst.

It will be a surprise. Atomic power is not the worst even though it has longer-term environmental issues that are very difficult to resolve - if at all. The capital venture group is a great solution but only a few UU's have the stomach for such risky investing or the composure to stick with it in the long run. Building wind driven electric generation towers is a good solution, but it fosters its own demands on mining, transmission lines, maintenance, and the like. Investing in dirty companies seems to be a no-no for business averse Unitarians who would have to do lots of organizing in a business milieu - very difficult work for UU's. It took years for stockholders to gather enough voices to transform Shell Oil and BP into two of the greenest oil companies in the world. (faint praise?)

In fact the worst option is that followed by many Unitarians in their retirement investing - invest only in green scanned companies. When I have asked UU clergy over the past ten years what the standards of the Walden funds are at Fidelity, they do not know. They trust that all is well and has been looked at by someone else. When I ask if their retirement funds are helping the environment on the ground, many say “Yes” and cite the Walden Funds. There is little knowledge that investing in the stock market is just that - investing in the stock market - not the individual companies. The companies got their money for those stocks years ago through initial offerings and stock issues to raise more investment money for the company. The only way to really help those companies is to buy stock from initial offerings (too risky for many UU's) or further stock offerings that a company issues to raise money for expansion. Most UU ministers would not know about those offerings.

I think I have ranted enough about this issue. Oh, where do I put my money? Never in socially

screened accounts! I vote proxies in dirty companies and have as much money as I can in companies which are working to increase the standard of living in developing countries around the world. It is not always pretty, but I believe it is the best way for me to go. Last year I earned 19%. Last week I was still up 12% this year.

Every day I read the business section of the daily newspaper and alternative sources of news. I receive dozens of newsletters from proxy voting groups. Even while the only minister at larger congregation - I found time to stay current each day. Time taken daily - about 40 minutes. It is not everyone's cup of tea - but it is mine. It is part of my practice of the search for truth and meaning. It is amazing how much I learn about good business practices which are raising the standard of living around the world. It is sad to learn about the nasty companies which abuse people and pollute the landscape. They, however, are a minority. NB: In terms of saving the world, my lifestyle and standard of living sucks!

### **INNOCENCE TRAMPLED - THE TRAIL OF INFLUENCE**

Months ago while walking my friend, Jess (yellow lab), at Bruce Pit, the off lease area in Ottawa, I noticed that there was a new trail trampled through a stand of raspberry canes. I wondered who or what did this. I carefully entered the trail, stepping back quite often to undo a thorn. Ah - I found evidence - hair from a deer on one particularly snarly jumble of thorn covered vines. I continued and finally I led to a trampled grassy area completely surrounded by low bushy white pines. It was their sleeping area. Had I not followed the trail, I would not have seen this gem of solitude and safety.

Let's move on to what we find out when we follow an influence trail. Rather than a more complex example, I will take a simple one, FACEBOOK, a popular meeting ground. FACEBOOK has recently drawn attention because it has made its founder, Mark Zuckerberg (21 years old Harvard student) a multimillionaire. How did all this start? First we have to know one thing about the internet. It is not free. If you have a website that generates the bandwidth that FACEBOOK has, you pay for it. Let's follow the money and the influence for a surprise.

With more than 2.8 million users, FACEBOOK holds a lot of information about people . . . a picture, favorite music, books, movies, address, phone numbers, e-mail, clubs, jobs, educational history, even political affiliations. There is a privacy statement concerning the information use.

Who pays for this? The first venture capital money for FACEBOOK, \$500,000, came from venture capitalist Peter Thiel, founder of Paypal. Thiel is on the Board of the radical conservative group VanguardPAC.

More money, \$12.7 million came from venture capital firm Accel Partners. Accel's manager James Breyer was former Chair of the National Venture Capital Association (NVAC). Breyer

served on NVAC's board with Gilman Louie, CEO of In-Q-Tel, a venture capital firm established by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1999. *This firm nurtures data mining technologies.*

Breyer has also served on the Board of BBN Technologies. In October of 2004, BBNT brought onboard Dr. Anita Jones, previously the Director of Defense Research and Engineering for the U.S. Department of Defense. Her responsibilities included serving as an advisor to the Secretary of Defense and overseeing the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

DARPA shot to national fame in 2002 when John Markoff of the New York Times announced the existence of the "Information Awareness Office" (IAO). The IAO had the stated mission to gather as much information as possible about everyone, in a centralized location, for easy perusal by the United States government, including (though not limited to) Internet activity, credit card purchase histories, airline ticket purchases, car rentals, medical records, educational transcripts, driver's licenses, utility bills, tax returns, and any other available data." Protests came from civil libertarians on both the right and the left who saw the IAO as a new Orwellian arm of the United States government. (Markoff, John, New York Times, November 7, 2002)

After Congress investigated DARPA's project, funding was cut off and IAO was essentially dead in the water.

Well, there is a privacy policy that protects FACEBOOK users, it reads, they "may share your information with third parties, including responsible companies with which we have a relationship." It goes on to say that, "FACEBOOK also collects information about you from other sources, such as newspapers and instant messaging services. This information is gathered regardless of your use of the Web Site." (Internet post by Connie Fogal, Executive Director, Global Trade Watch, November 3, 2007)

I hate conspiracy theory. I do not like the confluences here!

Ready to put yourself in FACEBOOK? Not me! However . . .

I shared this information with one of my sons, a FACEBOOK user. He emailed me: "I think you're underestimating "college students." If you're putting yourself out there you know you're signing off on some loss of privacy. Most of the people on Facebook grew up or were born in the tech era...for the most part we aren't ignorant about the evils.

Facebook is more than just a place for college students. Am I in college? Is S? It began for college students, but hasn't been only that for a year or two. I think of it as a bulletin board where your friends tack up what they're up to, what they like, etc, etc. Sometimes someone you thought you'd never hear from again even pops up and tacks something on there. I just got back in touch with TH, the New Zealander we met in Peru. That wouldn't have happened w/out Facebook. You can also interact in a way that wouldn't normally be possible. C and I play scrabble against each other

while at work. Friends "throw sheep at each other" using another plugin...it's like texting, but without the need to text back (in other words it keeps the friendship up over long distances without really needing to always put a lot into it...which is nice). For the most part it's used as exactly what it says it is: a social networking site."

While Facebook is a good networking tool, the log of influence surrounding FACEBOOK is disquieting. Finding and following the influence trail is hard work. It is work that we as ministers have little thirst for and even less time for, but it is work which our congregants need the fruit of if they care about privacy issues.

FACEBOOK is a post-modern global community which many innocent people love and trust. When entertainment breeches basic privacy - what has happened to boundaries in our culture? It is as important to name boundary abuse by FACEBOOK as it is to stop sexual boundary abuse!

### CONCLUSION

Our congregations need ministers who, in addition to their natural gifts, are vigilant in gathering information to help maintain proper boundaries in a confusing world. Our congregational cultures require accurate information and full discussion of alternatives within the scope of our stated values. This can help congregants as they make investment decisions. Those decisions will become models for parishioners. To be accurate, we must follow the influence and do the math. Foremost, in setting the values for our people, we must be thirsty for information and learn how to share information in a manner which is reasoned, avoiding conspiracies and suggestive of dire outcomes. In return for the honour of the great trust our congregants place in us as their spiritual leaders, we must be willing to give them guides and discussion points for beginning the dialog with business. It is hard work, but that is ministry - hard work.

Globalization is a large force which responds, in the current milieu, to the pressures of business. Business has huge influence with governments. UU's love to work with governments because we know the territory and the language. It is time we learn how to talk with business people and earn their respect. Some of these people are our best friends already - just look around!

### POSTSCRIPT

We have lost our compass as a people, as a species, that is why I spend so much time with my dog  
...

the hopelessly insatiable forget  
how passion sharpens appetites  
that gross indulgence numbs.  
Result?

The haves have not

what all the have-nots have  
since much of having is the need  
to have.

Even my dog  
knows that - and more than that.  
She slumbers in a moon of sunlight,  
scratches her twitches and itches  
in measure, savors every bite  
of grub with equal gratitude  
and stays determinedly in place  
unless what's suddenly exciting  
happens.

Viewing mere change  
as threatening, she relishes a few  
undoubtable and proven pleasures  
to enjoy each day in sequence  
and with canine moderation.  
They're there for her in waiting,  
and she never wears them out.

A selection from "The Necessary Brevity of Pleasures" by Samuel Hazo, from *A Flight to Elsewhere*. © Autumn House Press, 2005.