

‘POP GOES THE PROGRESS MYTH’: Awakening Biblical Hope in a Hypnotised Province

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CITIZENS *for* PUBLIC JUSTICE



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Introductory comments:

It's a great honour to be invited to share some thoughts with you on the occasion of Alberta's "new century." As both an academic and an activist, I want to take this opportunity to thank you, as part of the social justice community, for modelling for me, and so many others, your *courageous commitment to the biblical vision of justice and peace*. This has often encouraged me in the face of local and international injustice and oppression.

Birthday parties are generally positive and celebratory events. We don't go to "Uncle Ben's" birthday party and criticise him. Indeed, there is much to celebrate in Alberta's achievements over the past century. We have contributed to and benefited from astounding advances in science, technology, and economic growth. I could discuss wonderful innovations, such as, Edmonton's world class recycling and composting programs, Alberta's "Clean Air Strategic Alliance," the innovative "Family and Community and Support Services Program," the "Famous Five and the Person's Case," school systems that enable parental choice while maintaining equitable access for all, and the story of windmill farms powering Calgary's light rail transit system, to give a nod to the fair city to the south.¹

'New Century': Promised Land?

Many Albertans see our province as the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Cf. Exodus 3:16-18). In this land of hope and progress Albertans enjoy immense prosperity: materially, socially, & economically. We buy the latest high tech gadgets, freely enjoy awesome natural beauty, and bask in freedom and peace, while many in the world suffer deprivation, oppression and want. Not to mention, we live in the only debt-free province in Canada. Truly, Alberta is the land flowing with milk and honey!

While this is the preferred picture of many Albertans celebrating our centennial, when viewed through the lens of "biblical values for renewing the world," we feel compelled to 'pop' this self-congratulatory myth.

There goes our birthday 'good manners'! But the Gospel has a way of surprising us, of compelling us to recognize the dark underside of our personal and communal lives.

The 'Promised Land,' in the light of the Gospel, is plagued by *four deficits*. Very briefly, they are:

1. *The Social deficit:*

Using the Market Basket Measure [MBM], the Edmonton Social Planning Council reported that 350,000 people in Alberta lived in poverty in 2004. More than 100,000 of these were children (14.1%). Canada-wide, over 4 million people live below MBM low-income thresholds.²

These and many other statistics disclose a scandal of continuing and even growing poverty and inequity in Alberta.

2. *The Environmental deficit:*

This is a story of loss: loss of species, loss of habitat, loss of clean air, water, and soil, and the loss of future possibilities due to too rapid exploitation of resources.

This unpaid environmental deficit is being quietly passed on to our children.

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3. *The Democratic deficit:*

While Albertans praise individual self-determination and democratic freedom, voter turnout in our province steadily falls. Casting a vote in Alberta's 'winner take all' electoral system produces neither accurate nor accountable governments (47% of voters gave the Tories another majority government in the Legislature).³

And after governments **are** elected, the Legislature meets only for a short time. The Standing Policy Committees **are restricted to** government MLAs—locking out opposition voices representing 53% of voters—and they **meet behind closed doors!**

This 'politics of exclusion' is only worsened by the *populist politics of consultation*. Pseudo-representative summits are devised to 'divine' the will of the people. The results are then strained through the sieve of Premier Klein's self-assured fiat that "he knows what Albertans want."

This is further compounded by the Government's cynical manipulation of information and propaganda through what is named the "Alberta Public Affairs Bureau"! Finally, the democratic deficit is magnified, as Manitoba Member of Parliament Bill Blaikie has argued at the national level, when Albertans all too happily support the transfer of more and more democratic authority to socially unjust global structures.⁴

4. *The hidden fiscal deficit:*

While Alberta proclaims itself a debt-free province, it has arrived at the result by *shifting the burden* onto municipalities and other agencies, by under funding physical infrastructure and social and educational programs. The province further *shifts fiscal burdens* onto individuals and families through everything from increased medicare fees to licence and library fees. So much for a debt-free Alberta!

A New Vision Needed:

So far, I don't think I've told you much new. Alberta is *paradoxically* both a Promised Land and a debt-ridden province.

The solutions to these deficits have been obvious to us for decades: We need a more equitable and sustainable economy. Alberta desperately needs more social housing, higher minimum wages, better social assistance and AISH disability income, better elder-care, child care and medical care. The obvious solution to our *deficits* is *more and better*—more social programs, more environmental regulations, more democracy, and more financial income.

I am deeply committed to many of these solutions. Yet, on the eve of Alberta's 100th anniversary, **I wonder if they are really sufficient and far sighted enough?** My question was reinforced when recently I read the provocative and highly controversial October 2004 article: "*The Death of Environmentalism: Global warming politics in a post-environmental world.*"⁵

While honouring and celebrating the great achievements of the environmental movement, the authors Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus conclude, "*modern environmentalism is no longer capable of dealing with the world's most serious ecological crisis.*" [My emphasis in these quotations.]

Focusing on climate change, they argue that "in their public campaigns, *not one of*

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America's environmental leaders is articulating a vision of the future commensurate with the magnitude of the crisis. Instead they are promoting technical policy fixes like pollution controls and higher vehicle mileage standards – proposals that provide neither the popular inspiration nor the political alliances the community needs to deal with the problem.”

“What the environmental movement needs more than anything else right now is to *take a collective step back to rethink everything.* We will never be able to turn things around as long as we understand our failures as essentially tactical, and make proposals that are essentially technical.”

Shellenberger and Nordhaus argue that the environmental movement needs to create “new institutions and proposals around a big vision and a core set of values.”

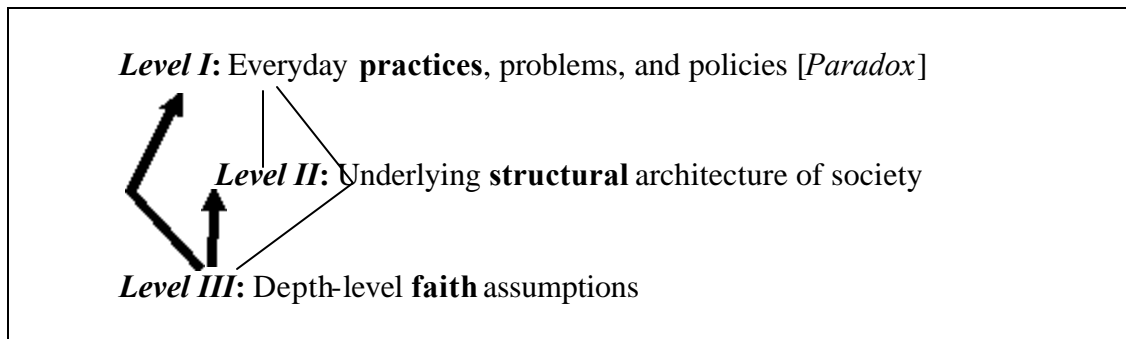
Essentially, the environmental movement needs to “*reframe their thinking about the problem and the solutions.*” [Footnote 1 contains this reference.]

“Environmentalists need to tap into the creative *worlds of myth-making, even religion,* not to better sell narrow and technical policy proposals but rather *to figure out who we are and who we need to be.*”

I think Christian social justice activists ought to take up Shellenberger and Nordhaus’s challenge, not just for climate change and environmentalism, but for the entire project of environmental, economic, social and political action and analysis.⁶ *Christian faith needs to be de-privatised* so it genuinely awakens Biblical Hope in this deficit-ridden province.

Many social justice groups in Alberta, including the Parkland Institute, have encouraged us on this centennial to take the opportunity for “envisioning and building the province we want for the next 100 years.”⁷

In the remainder of this keynote, I want to explore—for the *sake of further discussion and dialogue*—some questions and approaches that the Gospel of Jesus Christ raises for me as I struggle to understand this province. I’m going to structure the remainder of this address by moving systematically through three levels as described in the following box. The thick arrows indicate the direction of the strongest influences, while the thinner arrows indicate weaker return influences.



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This *method of analysis*⁸ allows us to ask some deeper structural and spiritual questions of Alberta's deficits and way of life.

Level I: Asking new questions of everyday practices, policies and paradoxes

Yes, Alberta urgently needs to solve its scandal of poverty. But doesn't *the paradox that we have growing poverty in the midst of unspeakable wealth* raise new questions beyond better redistribution and beyond ensuring the poor a bigger slice of the pie?

Yes, we desperately need to deal with poverty by fighting for a "living wage." But are arguments for technical adjustments to the minimum wage and for retooling Alberta into a "high productivity, knowledge-based economy,"⁹ really enough?

Yes, God's call for "justice for the poor, widowed and orphan" surely means we must argue for increased social assistance, AISH, and living wages, but in so doing, does the critique we offer and policy solutions we propose, truly expose and address what is going on in Alberta?

Take the *bigger picture on the income front*, for example. We see:

- Albertan's working harder and harder, for longer hours, getting sick from workplace stress, while earning proportionately less.
- We see work degraded into repetitive, technical and meaningless drudgery that makes a mockery of God-given human creativity and the reality of work community.
- Work is being reduced to the quantity of wages without regard to the quality of the work experience.
- Many are starting to see work as a necessary evil to put food on the table or to fund weekend escapes into booze, gambling and drugs.
- We see more and more households where both partners are forced to work in order to make ends meet, leaving them little time to care for family, neighbourhood, or friends; or to nurture civil society or citizenship; or to enjoy the natural creation, to care for its needs and repair its damage.
- We see a 'high productivity, knowledge-based economy' that simply feeds crazy consumer fads, such as, cell phone cameras, BlackBerries, wide-screen TVs, and ever-improving PCs, whether needed, wanted, or simply pushed on us.
- We see the most important activities in human life go unpaid, while at the same time destructive behaviours are often rewarded with fat salaries.

This picture suggests something bigger and more sinister is happening. To explore this further, let's look beyond the labour and income issues. In our wealthy society, we try feed our families in a healthy manner, but we discover:

- Our breakfast eggs are so pale you can't distinguish 'yoke from white'; because competition encourages farmers to squeeze eight chickens in a two-foot-square cage.
- Walk through any supermarket and you'll find bland tasting, pesticide- and herbicide-ridden, uniform vegetables; probably competitively shipped 2000 kilometres to end up in your lunchbag!

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- We buy beef for supper and find BSE [*bovine spongiform encephalopathy*—or mad cow disease] effecting our food supply. Can you believe it? We feed animal-remains as dietary supplements to cattle in order for farmers to survive in highly competitive market competition.
- We buy chicken for supper and discover they are only nine-week-old broilers forced and highly medicated.

What's *really* going on in our culture?

Level II: Underlying structural architecture:

A good part of the answer lies in the *underlying structural architecture*.

As a social justice community, we have done a good job of identifying some of the underlying structural issues in liberal capitalism and globalisation that often **force** our choices and **push us** in foolish directions.

- We have shown how **corporations** dominate contemporary society, even though they are often single-mindedly dedicated to narrow economic goals and maximising profit.¹⁰
- We have shown how **markets** are structured to force us—the so-called 'sovereign consumers'—to focus on narrow financial considerations and ignore justice, equity, solidarity, and stewardship when we exchange goods, services, labour and capital.
- We have shown how **political institutions** can be powerful agents of justice. But, we have also seen governments win democratic majorities and then implement oppressive and unjust agendas. In this sense, *democracy* is not an infallible guide to right and wrong, but a means of deliberating and making fallible human decisions.

Much more needs to be analysed concerning structures. But we also need to ask more thoroughly, *why* has Alberta created these structures? *What* explains their persistence and immense power in our lives?

Level III: Plumbing the spiritual depths of Alberta's culture

One sign that ought to encourage us to *dig deeper than structures*, is the widespread sense of powerlessness and apathy that reign in our province and often in our churches.¹¹ It's as though Albertans are *hypnotised*.

A leading dictionary defines hypnosis as "an artificially induced altered state of consciousness, characterised by heightened suggestibility and receptivity to direction."¹²

Sometimes, when we Albertans are shaken from our self-satisfied sense of Promised Land, we notice the oppression and destruction that follows in the wake of some of our personal, institutional and corporate behaviour.

But our eyes glaze over in an "altered state of consciousness." Opened to "heightened suggestibility," we believe the propagandists when they whisper in our ears that poverty, marginalization and environmental destruction are "fate." We feel trapped,

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powerless to escape the rat race of a competitive, globalized world. We resign ourselves to the only “direction” left to take, that is, to “adjust” to this “reality.” We repeat our society’s mantra: TINA—‘there is no alternative.’

This spectre of a *hypnotised province* should deeply shake Christians.

The Bible ties this phenomenon of hypnosis to idolatry.¹³ In the biblical picture of Creator and creation, there are no *autonomous* forces that can control our lives. Instead, it is the human creature, shaped in the image of God, who is capable of breathing life into idols. Idols spring to life when we become so obsessed with achieving one or more goals that we begin to trust in a particular creature—a thing, process, or institution—as the ultimate means to deliver our goal.¹⁴

I believe many Albertans, as most Canadians, are so obsessed with achieving the goal of material prosperity that we willingly breathe life into the ‘idol’ of the *market* in order to secure this goal. The Bible refers to this form of idolatry as *Mammon* (Lk 16:13-15). We believe that our total reliance on the market, aided by unrestrained scientific and technological development [often transformed into accompanying idols in our contemporary pantheon of the gods!], will lead society higher and onward to progress.¹⁵

This is the myth of progress! The Bible identifies idolatry as one key reason we fail to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6: 8).¹⁶

Thus a central feature of our Christian social justice calling, I want to argue, is to *unmask* all idolatries that masquerade as saviours in social and political life. Or in the language of my title, we need to ‘*pop the Progress Myth!*’

Side effects of idolatry:

Idolatry undermines justice by mis-shaping social and economic structures [level II] and everyday practices [level I]. This produces profound and serious side effects. Lets briefly examine systematically some central characteristics of idolatry.

1. Liberation is swallowed up in slavery:

In Psalm 135: 15-18 (my emphasis) we read:

The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
made by the hands of [humans].
They have mouths, but cannot speak,
eyes, but they cannot see;
they have ears, but cannot hear,
nor is there breath in their mouths.
*Those who make them will be like them,
and so will all who trust in them.*

Idols are only deified creatures and thus unable to perform and deliver. But ironically they do have power, the power to *enslave*. Our contemporary faith in progress, born during the Enlightenment, was meant to *liberate* human beings through market production aided and guided by science and technology. By rationally mastering nature we thought we could guarantee ever-increasing prosperity and thereby maximise human liberty.

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Albertans have been *hypnotised* by progress. Instead of *liberation*, we instead find ourselves trapped, powerless and *enslaved*. When we, in our honest moments, face up to domestic and international poverty, inequality, and environmental pillage, we end up hypnotically repeating the catchphrase: TINA—'there is no alternative.' As Psalm 135 states, "*Those who make [idols] will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.*"

2. *Idolatry generates ideologies:*

The roots of all pernicious and distorting ideologies are found in idolatry. These ideologies often function like pseudo-religions. When confronting idolatry, the prophet Jeremiah identifies this phenomenon as "deceptive words" (Jer 7:3-8). Today, ideologies decisively influence [or rationalize] the shaping of our society's structures, practices and policies. The presence of these ideologies, therefore, are "signs of the times," and ought to alert us to the presence of idolatry.

3. *Idolatry distorts God's norms and creational life:*

There are three specific types of distortions that should be recognised as markers of the "ideological signs of our times":

- (a) Ideologies demand that men, women, society and the environment *adjust* to the saving means (idol). We certainly see this phenomenon today with frequent exhortations from ideologists that we domestically and globally adjust to the "market."
- (b) Ideologies demand that *norms and values* be redefined to suit the idol. We see this, for example, in the way some leading politicians talk about justice as though it were merely the need to protect property regardless of how and why it was achieved.
- (c) Ideologies tend to create *false enemies* that can be blamed for the idol's shortcomings. The enemies of progress through ever-increasing economic growth, for example, are identified as the lazy immoral poor who contribute nothing to wealth creation while draining societal resources through welfare.¹⁷

4. *Complete and incomplete ideologies:*

Idols and their accompanying ideologies, or "deceptive words," are able to exercise power in our lives only in proportion to the degree that we are obsessed with achieving the related goal. So sometimes their power is weak and *incomplete*, distorting and twisting life in God's good creations. At other times, (e.g. Nazi Germany or Communist Russia or China) their power can be virtually *complete*, highly destructive, and totalitarian.

Alberta's oil sands development and signs of idolatry

Let's briefly examine my suggestions about idolatry and hypnosis in Alberta's flagship economic activity: the oil sands.

Have you ever seen anything so puzzling? Its like a cancerous growth that we feel obliged to keep feeding rather than fighting.

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We wildly invest billions of dollars into high technology projects to extract synthetic oil from the oil sands, and then (largely) ship them south of the border to power SUVs, heat oversized homes, and produce consumer goods for highly wasteful lifestyles.

Adding insult to injury, studies indicate that we burn 25 calories of natural gas to produce 100 calories of synthetic crude oil,¹⁸ and that does not count the additional energy needed to transport, re-refine additional products, and then further transport them. In the biblical view of economics, extracting energy from the oilsands in this way is simply *uneconomic* at this point. Wouldn't it be more logical today to use revenues gained from selling the original 25 calories of energy in order to subsidise and stimulate new energy conservation projects?

But things get worse. A 2005 Pembina Institute study shows both national and Alberta government policies encourage the rapid extraction of oil and gas. They offer *massive subsidies* to the oil sands projects through *low taxation, low royalty rates, and support for research and development*.

In fact, the current provincial oil sands *royalty* scheme essentially has the people of Alberta—the owners of this resource—pay off the initial oil sands capital investments of large corporations. In 1996, the Alberta Government set in place a generic royalty regime for projects developing the oil sands. Under this policy, an *Edmonton Journal* editorial reports, “companies pay only one per cent royalty on new projects until the capital costs are paid off. At that point, the royalty rate bounces up to the standard 25 per cent of net revenues.”¹⁹

Finally, we know that oil sand developments have very high environmental impacts. They cause high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, significant surface land disturbance, high levels of air contaminants (including acid rain), not to mention that they rapidly exhaust a non-renewable resource.²⁰

What's going on here?

Clearly, some companies and investors are getting rich, some workers have high paying jobs, and sovereign consumers in the markets—at least those with economic power to register their demand—are served. And this clearly raises the urgent need for justice, equity and redistribution.

But at the deepest spiritual level, the oil sands development is a “sign of the times.” It ought to call Christians to also engage *the religious direction of our culture*.

Perhaps many Albertans fail to question the validity of these projects because we are hypnotised by our commitment to progress through narrow economic growth. While social justice pleas for technical adjustments to governmental fiscal policy, environmental regulations, or economic practices are crucial, do they really address the ‘spirit of our times’ demonstrated in these developments?

Idolatry requires depth-level social analysis, an approach that should also push us to recognise the corporate and individual need for *repentance* and *conversion*. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, for example, has instituted a “*Processus Confessionis*” in which the member denominations participate in repentance and a call to conversion as integral parts of their response to world-wide economic injustice and ecological destruction.²¹ These are biblical practices that Christians should be well equipped to bring to the social justice table.²²

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By doing so, we can prophetically call for biblical norms and values—justice, equity, solidarity, stewardship and peace—to be moved up from *afterthoughts* to the place of *starting points* for renewing society and all of God's creatures.²³

Conclusion:

In conclusion, much more can and should be discussed. I look forward to upcoming discussions in which the social justice community "*takes a collective step back to rethink everything.*"

The Gospel points us to the One who is already *awakening Biblical hope in our hypnotised province*. Jesus is "the first born over all creation" (Col 1: 15), St. Paul writes, "for from him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom. 11: 36). No rebellious idolised power in creation can permanently destroy the shalom that God desires for all creatures in the good creation. For Christ has already "disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Col. 2:14-15).

Christ's actions fulfil one of the most beautiful images in the Psalms. Psalm 82 pictures the Creator covenanting with human creatures as representative of all creatures:

Love and Fidelity now meet,
Justice and Peace now embrace;
Fidelity reaches up from the earth
and Justice leans down from heaven.
(From *Psalm 85*)²⁴

Let us, in *faithfulness, reach up from the earth*, in the assurance that God in Christ has, and is, *leaning down from heaven*, eager to extend the gift of justice to all creatures!²⁵

Dr. John Hiemstra (keynote speaker)

Dr. John Hiemstra is currently Professor of Political Science at The King's University College in Edmonton. He completed his Ph.D. studies on the interface of political philosophy and public policy at the University of Calgary in 1992. His thorough research and thoughtful insight come out of deeply held Christian convictions that have led him to be respected in the wider community. In the 1980's he was one of the Alberta staff persons for Citizens for Public Justice, a national, non-partisan organization which has promoted justice in Canadian public affairs for over 35 years. During that time he was involved in research and advocacy on many fronts of social justice at the grassroots level. He currently serves as Chair of the national Board of the Public Justice Resource Centre, affiliated with Citizens for Public Justice. (Drawn from the *Social Justice Institute 2005 Brochure*.)



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Endnotes

¹ On the Clear Air Strategic Alliance, "From Enemies to collaborators: Alliance is breath of fresh air." *Edmonton Journal*, March 7, 2004. On pluralism in Edmonton public schools see http://www.epsb.ca/datafiles/AlternativePrograms_2004_05.pdf. On wind power used to run mass transit see http://www.visionquestwind.com/pdf/Media_Release_June_13_02.pdf. On the Famous Five see <http://canadaonline.about.com/cs/women/a/personscase.htm>. On Family and Alberta's Family and Community Support Services see http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/whatwedo/fcss/pdf/fcss_handbook.pdf. On Edmonton's recycling and composting programs see <http://www.edmonton.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway>.

² Edmonton Social Planning Council, National Election News Release, May 23, 2004.

³ On the need for a new proportional representation electoral system, see www.fairvotecanada.org.

⁴ See Bill Blakie "Revitalizing Democracy in an era of Competitive Globalization," *Canadian Parliamentary Review*. Spring 2000, and Preston Manning, "We must overcome Canada's harmful democratic deficit," *Edmonton Journal*, Jan. 24, 2003, A18.

⁵ Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus "The Death of Environmentalism: Global warming politics in a post-environmental world," released at the Oct. 2004 meeting of the Environmental Grantmakers Association. <http://www.grist.org/news/maidish/2005/01/13/doe-reprint/>.

⁶ There are a wide variety of contributions available for this reconsideration, for example, see Bob McKeon's very helpful analysis of the crisis in the Canadian Catholic Social Justice Paradigm, a mode of engagement which involved working in "collaborative ecumenical social justice initiatives" with any other Canadian churches (3). McKeon argues that the "need to work towards a new social justice paradigm is urgent" (4). Robert Martin McKeon, *The Canadian Catholic Social Justice Paradigm: Birth, Growth, Decline, and Crisis*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of St. Michael's College and Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, 2003.

⁷ The Parkland Institute, Committee on Alberta's Finances, *A Time for Vision: A Sustainable and Equitable Economy*, April 2005.

⁸ I have learned much about doing justice from Gerald Vandezande, see *Justice, Not Just Us: Faith Perspectives and National Priorities*, Toronto: Public Justice Resource Centre, 1999. I have learned much about conducting depth-level analyses of society from Bob Goudzwaard. See *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Society*, Translated by Josina van Nuis Zylstra. Toronto: Wedge/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979/ Second Edition, Paternoster Press, 1997. Also see Bob Goudzwaard and Harry De Lange. *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Towards a Canadian Economy of Care*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

⁹ See Dennis Howlett, "The call for a living wage: Activists fighting for fair wages across the country," *Canadian Dimension*, May/June 2005, 25-28.

¹⁰ See the movie: "*The Corporation*," <http://www.thecorporation.com/>, based on Joel Bakan's *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*.

¹¹ The participation of many Christians and Church communities in the phenomenon discussed in this section, can be explained in part by the prevalence of a split world picture in our communities—a dualistic divorce of the secular, rational public realm from the spiritual private realm. Christians have too easily adopted prevailing ideologies in our 'public' lives while limiting the Gospel to private matters. Jesus warns, however, that no one can serve two masters. "Either s/he will hate the one and love the other, or s/he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Matt. 6:23-25.

¹² *American Heritage Dictionary*.

¹³ The centrality of the theme of idolatry in the Bible is already evident by the fact it is discussed in 213 passages: 172 on 'idols' and another 41 on 'idol.'

¹⁴ Note that both the goal of material prosperity and the means of market exchange can be good things in God's creation. It is our obsession with this goal and over reliance on market means that distorts them. Other elements of creation that we improperly call on to deliver our obsessive goals—like "fail-safe survival of our nation" or "guaranteed security"—are the "state," "law and order," and "revolutionary change."

¹⁵ See John Mihevc's (1-4) and other references to idolatry in *Jubilee, Wealth & the Market*, Toronto: Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, 1999. The definition of idolatry in this paper is similar to what Kairos (Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives) refers to as "the consequences of unbridled human activity (alias sin)" <http://www.kairosCanada.org/e/ecology/climateChange/turningUpHeat.asp>.

¹⁶ If this analysis is correct, then contrary to Enlightenment-based analysis of society as simply 'rational,' faith is **already** active in our culture. In this context, Christians may confidently make their faith-based social justice contribution to public debate on issues.

¹⁷ From Bob Goudzwaard, *Idols of our Time*, Dowers Grove: Intervarsity, 1981. An example of analysing poverty in Canada from this approach can be found in the background paper, of which I was principal author, "Good News to the Poor! Background Paper on The Bible, Poverty, and Government in Contemporary Canada," Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Background Paper, in John Mihevc, ed., *Jubilee, Wealth & the Market*, Toronto: Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, 1999, 141-159. Also available as "Poverty and Homelessness," at http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/resources/full_list.asp#Topic_17.

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¹⁸ Mark Anielski, "The End of Cheap Oil," *The Post*, The Parkland Institute, Winter 2005, 14.

¹⁹ Editor, "Suncor has had plenty of breaks," *Edmonton Journal*, May 10, 2004, A14. For details see "Alberta's Oil Sands: Update on the Generic Royalty Regime," <http://www.energy.gov.ab.ca/1911.asp>, accessed May 10, 2005.

²⁰ See Amy Taylor, Matthew Bramley and Mark Winfield, "Executive Summary and Preface." *Government Spending on Canada's Oil and Gas Industry: Undermining Canada's Kyoto Commitment*, Pembina Institute, Jan. 2005. These are perverse subsidies; government should tax harmful activity and subsidise normative and healthy activity.

²¹ See World Alliance of Reformed Churches "*Processus Confessionis*" approach to worldwide economic injustice and ecological destruction at <http://www.warc.ch/pc/index.html>. Also see the related paper by Bob Goudzwaard, "Globalisation, Exclusion, Enslavement," *Reformed World*, Vol. 46, Number 3 (Sept. 1996) 1-8, available at: www.warc.ch/pc/rw963/01.html, accessed Nov. 12, 2004. For an evangelical approach to achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals, see "Overview of the Micah Challenge" and "The Micah Call: phrase by phrase," <http://micahchallenge.org>, accessed Dec. 22, 2004.

²² In light of threatening contemporary challenges, our mode of operation should be to pray and ask, with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "what is the will of God at this moment of our lives?" *Ethics*, NY: Macmillan, 1955.

²³ Integral to a Christian approach to the development of alternative policies and way of life should be a kind of reversal of the approach to analysis in this paper—the three levels of analysis. We need careful deliberation on the meaning of central Biblical ideas like creation, humanity, sin, grace, liberation, and history for creating "space"—degrees of freedom—in which steps can be taken to transform structures and carve out new healing ways of life. See, for example, "A 12-step program for economic recovery," in Bob Goudzwaard and Harry De Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Towards a Canadian Economy of Care*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

²⁴ Translation from Nicolas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983, 3.

²⁵ For anyone who objects that this is too 'idealistic' and we need to be more realistic, we need only point to the unrealism and destructive qualities of contemporary economic and social activities under the highly idealistic faith in progress. The Bible's message is that creation is 'real,' and that we can hear, within this very good creation, the call of the redeeming Creator that we live realistically within creation by following the Creator's will to do justice, be stewardly, love one's neighbour, and seek peace. This is the way creation realistically works best!