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Defeating the 'climate pharaohs'

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Eco Catholic

The environmental group 350.org is urging municipalities, universities, pension funds, religious groups and individuals to divest themselves from stock in companies that mine fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas). The pollution from fossil fuels is, of course, a major contributor to the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that contributes to climate change.

The moral premise for this campaign is simple: It's wrong to profit from ruining the planet.

The debate over this proposition is just reaching religious groups, but no one is more colorful or persuasive on this issue than Rabbi Arthur Waskow of The Shalom Center in Philadelphia.

He has renamed the whole campaign "Move our Money, Protect our Planet." In case you missed it, the acronym is "MOM/POP." But that's not all. The Shalom Center website puts the case ever so biblically: "Move our money away from the Climate Pharaohs that are bringing Plagues upon our planet [and] instead ... invest both in wind and solar energy, and in projects to empower the poor who are most vulnerable to the ravages of modern Climate Plagues."

Waskow encourages religious communities of all kinds, and religiously affiliated universities, to join the campaign.

But the biblical analogies don't stop there. Bill McKibben, head of 350.org, says he was once challenged about this campaign for divestment by someone who said, "Look, you can't win; this is like David taking on Goliath." McKibben responded, "I know how that story ends! I used to teach Sunday school."

And many of us remember that a divestment campaign helped to bring down the apartheid of South Africa.

Catholic groups, including universities and religious communities, can be expected to join this movement. Although some groups can divest instantly, 350.org is suggesting a five-year time frame for many groups to divest.

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