

Interview with Wilfred Hahn.

Wilfred Hahn is the founder and Chief Investment Officer for HAHN Investment Stewards. For almost three decades he has worked in the global investment industry in senior executive capacities. Prior to leaving proverbial “Wall Street,” Mr. Hahn was head of Canada’s largest global investment operation — the *Global Investment Group* of the Royal Bank of Canada, a leading bank in North America. In this position, he oversaw all of the global discretionary portfolio operations and investment strategies of this institution, comprising the activities of staff in nine countries and assets of clients totaling in excess of US \$10 billion. During this time, Wilfred for a time was also Chairman of an offshore mutual fund company.

Given a Biblical worldview, Wilfred’s travels and experiences as a global investment industry executive and researcher on “Wall” and “Bay” streets, have spurred urgent perspectives on world trends. His views are particularly relevant to Christians living in the end times, a time of great deception, wealth distortions and economic oppression.

Wilfred and his wife, Joyce, launched *The Mulberry Ministry* in 1995. It is a private activity unrelated to his employment positions. Its main communication is through *Eternal Value Review*, a periodical for “*thinking Christians seeking to understand the times.*” The ministry is an outgrowth of many years of trying to reconcile Christian faith with a demanding career in the field of global money, a domain of much earthly ambition and competitiveness. These two worlds are rarely comfortably aligned.

Recently Christian Advisor spoke to Mr. Hahn about his work and his faith.

Can you give our readers a quick overview of Wilfred Hahn – your background and your passions?

In addition to what you have just described, I would add that I have come to know the investment industry intimately, both as practitioner and a student of financial history. I know the ethos and lucre of this industry first hand. I understand the difficult ethical challenges that may arise from time to time and that these can test the souls of the strongest people. Twice in my career I have felt it necessary to leave my position in order to avoid complicity in various practices or conditions that I felt were not in the best interests of society or the consumer.

As for passions, I would genuinely say the raw outdoors (canoeing, primitive camping ...etc) and Scriptures. With respect to the latter, once one comes to the view that the Scriptures are divinely inspired (every jot and tittle) they become a life-long treasure of learning and revelation that never ends. It is an impossibility that such a book could have been the fabrication of mankind.

The name of your company is HAHN Investment Stewards. It is a bit unusual to see the word steward in connection with an investment company – why the name?

We originally chose the word “steward” to be part of our firm’s name as it reflected the multifaceted nature of this task. It embraces client interest (a focus on managing what is not ours for the benefit of another) cost management, efficiency, searching for ways and technologies that offer better approaches. We do not claim to be able to predict the future ... to have any other advantage other than to work diligently and make decisions that are intellectually honest to the best of our knowledge and capability.

Our firm does not market itself as Christian nor target Christians. (The wealth management company is not a ministry and is not associated with Mulberry Press Inc.) We expect a certain standard of conduct and ethics of our partners and staff, whether these individuals may be Christian or not. Personally, (not our firm, only myself) I do not take any clients. Mainly, that is due to my overall responsibilities, but also because people that search me in out in response to my various Christian writings often have an unreasonable expectation of me. I could never live up to them. I am also of the opinion that doing so would risk jeopardizing my personal ministry activities. We are adamant that

that these Christian activities not be a front for “financial gain,” this motive clearly having been censured by Apostle Paul (1 Timothy 6:5).

The Bible says we cannot serve both God and mammon – how do you understand this verse (Matt 6:24) in light of your work.

This statement of Christ reveals the tension that exists in the world between these two polarities. There is never a resting point in the endeavour to choose to serve God. In my conception, it is a condition of this dispensation ... this present stewardship under God’s Kingdom. As applies with the force of gravity, we never fall up ... rather we fall down. Similar to the constant pull of Mammon, gravity is a force that we can never rest fully rest against as it is always pulling down. As Paul said, we are to continue to “work out your salvation”(Philippians 2:12) and the bringing of praise must be a sacrifice. (Hebrew 13:15) Therefore, the act of choosing to serve God and to be vigilant against the entreaties and seductions of Mammon require initiative, active thought and awareness.

In the context of my work, I recognize that the world sphere of money and its institutionalized systems are definitely in the spiritual realm of Mammon and that markets in themselves are amoral.

Yet, there remains a legitimate need to husband (not hoard) savings and assets. If this task is pursued with the proper motivations, then this is a worthy vocation.

How do you live out biblical stewardship in your business?

The challenge in some aspects of active money management is that an attitude of good stewardship will not necessarily always result in outstanding results (at least, as may be popularly defined). If good stewardship were a sure-fire way to make guaranteed riches as the world would define, then everyone would want to be a good steward (indeed, even want to be a Christian). We must be careful not to make this connection with the task of stewardship. Stewardship must therefore be more reliably defined as an attitude of diligence, honesty and complete service to the interests of the other person, the client. We must be committed to doing the best we honestly can.

(We have published a number of pamphlets and articles related to this prickly topic ... i.e. Preying on the Faithful, Spirit-led Investing: Spurious or inspired? ... etc.)

In today’s economic times, the average Christian investor has no idea who or what to trust anymore – what advice can you give?

This question strikes to the heart of a great dilemma currently. The world is facing unprecedented transitions and trends — geopolitical, material and spiritual. It is a time of increasing confusion and deception. Who can reasonably and reliably stay abreast of these waves? Most certainly, there is a great crisis of trust.

My answer to this challenge is a simple one: 1. Whatever may happen, guard your heart and ensure that any decision taken is for a God-honouring reason; 2. Try your very best to understand the times in reference to a Biblical worldview; 3. Diversify your investment affairs for few (if any) can reliably forecast the future; and lastly; 4. Do not allow the world and its markets to dictate what is a success or failure with respect to eternal values. This is the ultimate long-term investment view.

The above is an adaptation from an article by the Canadian Christian Business Foundation in Christian Advisor April 2009