THE GREENING OF EVANGELICALISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Liberal Studies

By

Robin J. Kline, M.A.L.S.

Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.
April 15, 2017
THE GREENING OF EVANGELICALISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Robin J. Kline, M.A.L.S.

DLS Chair: Jose Casanova, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the evangelical perspective on environmentalism, looking at two of the largest evangelical groups in the United States as case studies, in order to ascertain whether evangelicals as a whole are becoming more supportive of environmentally friendly endeavors based upon a growing postmillennial perspective, and specifically, whether this perspective is causing evangelicals to become more engaged in actions that affect the nation’s environmental policy in a way that is protective of the environment.

Based in a belief in the sanctity of God’s Creation, the position of the environmental evangelical is that the biblical interpretation of human dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:28) skew towards stewardship, not domination. This position has become known as “creation care” within evangelical circles, to emphasize the biblical basis for human engagement with the natural world from a stewardship standpoint of preserving and protecting the environment. Through political action, grassroots activity, and the growing involvement of stewardship-based curricula and other activities at evangelical seminaries, colleges and universities, the ethic of creation care appears to be gaining traction for evangelicals in the United States as increasing numbers embrace the belief in en-
vironmental stewardship as a God-centered human value based in the sanctity of life, and the moral and ethical requirements to honor, respect and protect it.

The two groups included as case studies in this thesis include the National Association of Evangelicals and the Southern Baptists. In addition to a critical review of relevant literature, analyses of various types of qualitative and quantitative data related to evangelicals, and analyses of key creation care documents, this thesis also includes information from approximately thirty-five hours of author interviews with thirty-seven evangelical leaders and laypersons involved with environmental efforts. Information from an additional four persons interviewed years previous to the start of this thesis is also included, due to the relevancy of their comments to the topic area. Various mainstream publications are also cited throughout this thesis, primarily to gain perspective on the development of creation care through time, and to provide context for the relationship between evangelicals and the secular community with regard to environmentalism.

The literature, publications, interviews and data reveal the complexities inherent in the interrelationship between evangelicals and the natural world, evangelicals and the secular world, and within evangelicalism itself as believers seek to understand their relationship with God and what this relationship calls upon them to do with regard to Creation.
CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT ii

ABSTRACT iii

ABBREVIATIONS vi

INTRODUCTION: FRAMING THE THESIS 1

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW 9

CHAPTER TWO: THE LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTER OF CREATION CARE — PRE- AND POSTMILLENNIAL TENSION 43

CHAPTER THREE: EVANGELICALS AND THE EVOLUTION OF (POLITICAL) ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION 80

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LAITY — GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION 128

CHAPTER FIVE: INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CREATION CARE AT EVANGELICAL SEMINARIES AND UNIVERSITIES 158

CHAPTER SIX: THE FUTURE OF CREATION CARE AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL — EVANGELICAL INFLUENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY 209

CONCLUSION 241

APPENDIX 247

BIBLIOGRAPHY 256
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAAS</td>
<td>American Association for the Advancement of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAR</td>
<td>American Academy of Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASHE</td>
<td>Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACUPCC</td>
<td>American College University Presidents Climate Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance</td>
<td>Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation (see CASC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au Sable</td>
<td>Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call</td>
<td><em>Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action</em>, a document issued by the Evangelical Climate Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASC</td>
<td>Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation (see Alliance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCU</td>
<td>Consortium of Christian Colleges &amp; Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP21</td>
<td>21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris, France in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP22</td>
<td>22nd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Marrakech, Morocco in 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRCNA</td>
<td>Christian Reformed Church in North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTFM</td>
<td>Christians for the Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWP</td>
<td>Climate Witness Project of the Christian Reformed Church in North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Environmental Assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ECA          | Evangelical Call to Action (the “Call”)
<p>| ECI          | Evangelical Climate Initiative |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EEN</td>
<td>Evangelical Environmental Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>United States Environmental Protection Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERLC</td>
<td>Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Environmental Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Endangered Species Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Evangelicals for Social Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRASCO</td>
<td>Foundation for Religious Action in the Social and Civil Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibson Resolution</td>
<td>H.Res.424, commitment of the House of Representatives to environmental stewardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSI</td>
<td>Green Seminary Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSD</td>
<td>Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPCC</td>
<td>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPL</td>
<td>Interfaith Power and Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRI</td>
<td>John Ray Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEED</td>
<td>Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a rating system devised by the United States Green Building Council to evaluate the environmental performance of a building and encourage market transformation towards sustainable design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWCF</td>
<td>Land and Water Conservation Fund of the United States National Park Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATS</td>
<td>Mercury and Air Toxics Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAE</td>
<td>National Association of Evangelicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEP</td>
<td>New Evangelical Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPRE</td>
<td>National Religious Partnership for the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCB</td>
<td>Polychlorinated Biphenyl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEI</td>
<td>Scientists and Evangelicals Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>Seminary Stewardship Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STARS</td>
<td>Sustainability, Tracking, Rating and Assessment System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFCC</td>
<td>United Nations Framework on Climate Change in Bonn, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEA</td>
<td>World Evangelical Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YECA</td>
<td>Young Evangelicals for Climate Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

FRAMING THE THESIS

This thesis will examine the evangelical perspective on environmentalism, or “creation care,” ascertaining whether evangelicals as a whole are becoming more or less supportive of environmentally friendly endeavors based upon a growing postmillennial perspective – and specifically – whether evangelicals are actively engaged in actions that affect United States environmental policy in a way that is more protective of the environment. For the purposes of this document, the terms “environmentalism,” “creation care” and “stewardship” are used interchangeably.

At the heart of the issue for evangelicals is how to interpret Genesis 1:28 within the context of the human relationship with the natural environment. The English terms "dominion" and "subdue" have been variously re-translated from Greek texts, resulting in what is in effect a translation of a translation. It should be noted that where the Greek is an "inspired" translation of the Hebrew original, there are some who would recognize the need to include an understanding of the latter, making the translation and interpretation issue still more complicated — which is always the case in wrestling with biblical texts. The fundamental issue with revealed texts such as the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament is that translation requires interpretation; for progressive evangelicals reexamining

---

the meaning of "dominion" and "subdue" based upon Hebrew and Greek texts, a new interpretation is resulting in a changing perspective of God's mandate for the human relationship with nature that leans more towards stewardship and less towards literal dominion.

The evangelical groups primarily represented in this thesis include two of largest in the nation, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), which encompasses forty-five thousand churches representing approximately forty different denominations; and the Southern Baptists, which comprise a network of more than fifty thousand churches in the United States, according to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

One question at issue for any discussion involving evangelicals and the environment is how to define what an evangelical is, especially given the relatively high numbers of Americans who self-identify as evangelical. Although difficult to categorize as an entity due to the prevalence of non-hierarchical autonomous churches and self-identification, evangelicals do share what historian Mark Noll calls “a set of defining beliefs and practices.” Noll describes evangelicalism as a “nominal” category, because believers are strongly influenced by revival traditions but move in many different directions: “Not all the time do these different groups actually want to talk to each other and are aware of

---

1 NAE website, accessed January 14, 2017, http://nae.net/about-nae/. The NAE “serves a constituency of millions” according to its website (individual member church websites and other online resources indicate membership to be more than 7.7 million). The Southern Baptist Convention, a network of voluntarily-participating Southern Baptist churches which offers the most quantifiable data on Southern Baptist membership, indicates an estimated 15.3 million members according to its website, accessed January 14, 2017, http://www.bpnews.net/46989/acp-more-churches-reported-baptism-worship-numbers-decline.

each other’s existence.” However, despite the intra-evangelical differences, “cohesion has always been present, both from the common original commitment to revival and from the strength of shared convictions.” Historian David Bebbington’s quadrilateral offers a much-cited definition of evangelicalism, and Noll has referenced the quadrilateral as “one of the most useful definitions” of the evangelical phenomenon. Bebbington ascribes four qualities to evangelicals: conversionism (the belief that lives need to be changed), activism (the expression of the gospel in effort), biblicism (a particular regard for the Bible), and crucicentrism (a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross). George M. Marsden has suggested a fifth characteristic, transdenominationalism, which describes evangelicals’ willingness to see other evangelicals as part of the same family despite denominational differences.

The NAE includes Bebbington’s quadrilateral as part of their summary of evangelical distinctives, in an expanded version: conversionism refers to the belief that lives need to be transformed through a “born-again” experience and a lifelong process of following Jesus; activism is the expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts; biblicism denotes a high regard for and obedience to the Bible

---


6 David W. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 2-3.

7 George M. Marsden, Evangelicalism and Modern America, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), vii-xvi.
as the ultimate authority; and crucicentrism stresses the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity.\textsuperscript{8} The SBC includes all four elements of the quadrilateral in the organization’s statement of faith, but does not mention Bebbington’s quadrilateral by name.\textsuperscript{9}

Political scientist Robert Booth Fowler has argued that at all levels of Protestantism there is now a considerable consensus on the necessity of action by Christian people to address the environment. What is lacking is a unified response.\textsuperscript{10} The real issue for evangelicals is deciding what being “green” really means: “What are the serious and costly choices people are prepared to make? From another angle I could argue that greening in evangelical circles is really of most significance in showing how easily evangelicalism is penetrated by strong cultural fads or…crusades.”\textsuperscript{11} Whatever the perception regarding the greening of evangelicals, the past several decades have illustrated a pro-environment shift in evangelical attitudes, including increased activism at the grassroots, state and Federal levels, as well as an increased willingness to work with secular institutions that are actively involved in environmental protection. However, the economic downturn

---

\textsuperscript{8} NAE website, accessed April 10, 2016, \url{http://nae.net/what-is-an-evangelical/}.


\textsuperscript{11} Robert Booth Fowler email communication with author, November 28, 2009. Current statistics continue to reinforce Fowler’s statement regarding cultural penetration. According to Pew Research Center’s most recent national survey, accessed March 1, 2017, \url{http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/12/14/most-americans-favor-stricter-environmental-laws-and-regulations/}, a pro-environment bias exists in the U.S. with most Americans (59%) saying stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost, compared with roughly a third (34%) who say such regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy.
in the United States in late 2008, in concert with renewed political vigor from the conserva-
тивative right, the rise of the Tea Party, and the election of Donald J. Trump as the nation’s
forty-fifth President, resulted in decreased visible environmental activity among evangeli-
cals, including coordination with the secular world.

Despite these setbacks, there remains a modest but highly effective and growing
contingent of evangelicals who are actively supportive of environmental protection and
conservation. This is significant for two reasons. The first is the evident transformation
from pre- to postmillennial belief within evangelicalism, which is at its heart hermeneu-
tic. Theological arguments about dominion versus stewardship throughout the Bible are
being (re)interpreted by creation care proponents from moral, ethical and social justice
perspectives in a way that makes environmental protection and conservation a central part
of what God is calling humans to do during their time on Earth. This has had a profound
effect on many evangelicals in terms of political motivation and engagement, which in
turn is helping to redefine what being “evangelical” means.

The second is the political power of the evangelical lobby in America, including
the ability to sway legislation at the local, state and national levels. As is true with right to
life issues and same sex marriage, environmentally-conscious evangelical leaders are able
to rally their followers to engage in political action supporting issues that they believe
have a significant moral and ethical component, such as creation care. The approach of
the environmental evangelical is that people must be transformed in their beliefs and be-
haviors towards the Earth. Spreading the Word is not just about saving souls, it is about
saving lives: people must be taught the value of creation in order to become stewards, not exploiters, as God intended. As one of the largest and most powerful lobbying and voting groups in the United States, evangelicals (both church-affiliated and self-described) have the ability to critically shape the future of environmental policy in the United States.

The goal of this thesis is threefold: to present compelling evidence of a premillennial to postmillennial shift within the American evangelical population; to illustrate that this shift is translating into an environmental ethos that is becoming part of evangelicals’ religious value system; and to illustrate that this environmental ethos is resulting in legislation that is protective of the environment. Overall, the trajectory of this thesis encompasses human values through discussion of the interwoven relationship between God and humans, humans and nature, and the effect and understanding of this dual relationship on humans' relationship with each other.

Methodology

The research methodology used for this thesis includes a critical review of selected relevant primary and secondary literature (primary authors are evangelical, and are designated as such); analyses of available qualitative and quantitative data related to evangelical environmental views; review of key documents on creation care; and approximately thirty-five hours of author interviews, conducted primarily by phone in 2016, with thirty-seven evangelical leaders and laypersons involved with evangelical environmental efforts. There were five exceptions to the phone interviews: an in-person interview conducted with evangelical ethicist David Gushee of Mercer University; and four
email interviews conducted with Deborah Fikes, former executive advisor to the World Evangelical Alliance; E. Calvin Beisner of the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation; Rob Sisson of ConservAmerica, and Mark Stoll of Texas Tech University. Data sources include, primarily, Pew Research Center, the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), Gallup, and Barna. Other sources are cited as appropriate throughout this document.

Initially, it was thought that no more than fifteen interviewees would be the total sample size, with selection based upon individuals’ published or otherwise widely-acknowledged involvement in creation care efforts. However, nearly every interviewee suggested two or three additional individuals who should be interviewed, and those interviewees suggested another two or three, with a snowball effect. In the end, thirty-seven interviews were conducted during the time period available to write this thesis. Information from an additional four persons interviewed years previous to the start of this thesis is also included, due to the relevancy of their comments to the topic area. Several of those interviewed requested anonymity due to political and/or personal concerns about speaking on the topic of creation care, and are therefore identified only by organization or type of organization.

Various mainstream publications are also cited throughout this thesis for reference purposes, primarily to gain perspective on the development of creation care through time, and to provide context for the relationship between evangelicals and the secular community with regard to environmentalism. The literature, publications, interviews and data
reveal the complexities inherent in the interrelationship between evangelicals and environmentalism, including disparities between the progressive and conservative contingents within evangelicalism, and the evolving pro-environmental beliefs of those in the middle who may be becoming the silent majority.
The literature reviewed for this thesis indicates that over the past several decades there has been an increase in interest and activity among evangelicals in the area of creation care, presenting compelling evidence that the current outlook within the American evangelical population is becoming inclusive of an environmental ethos as part of their religious belief system. This review includes both primary and secondary sources; primary sources are evangelical authors and are designated as such in the text.

There has been a plethora of literature written about evangelicals and the environment in general, most of which has focused on examining the link between evangelical theology/ethics and environmentalism, with specific attention to a hermeneutic shift in Scriptural interpretation from a traditional dominion-based philosophy of creation, to one based in stewardship. Two of the most well known evangelical authors in this area are Calvin B. DeWitt and David P. Gushee, both of whom have been at the forefront of the creation care movement in the United States.

DeWitt, one of the earliest and most prolific evangelical writers on creation care, lays out his case from a Christian ethics standpoint in *Earthwise, A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues*. DeWitt, who is also a biologist and zoologist, outlines in great detail the scripturally-derived mandate for Christians to “reclaim creation for our Lord,” knowing that ‘the Earth is the Lord’s and everything in it’ (Psalm 24:1), and that we may
eagerly do so out of joyful gratitude for God’s great gift of salvation.”

The book is written as a primer for Christians to take action in the world to become stewards of creation, while also exploring the reasons for environmental degradation. Using scriptural references from Psalms 104 for emphasis, DeWitt describes how the natural world shows us God’s glory and love through “seven provisions of creation,” including energy from the sun, soil and land building, ecosystems that cycle and recycle, water purification, fruitfulness and abundant life, global air and water circulation, and the human ability to learn from creation.

He then describes how each of these provisions is degraded by humankind through pollution, species extinction, over consumption, and various type of destruction, much of which is done in ignorance. “Creation’s garden abundantly yields blessed fruits, sustainably supporting us and all life…But we descendants of the first Adam have made the choice to extract more…at the expense of destroying creation’s protective provisions.”

DeWitt says in the end, we must “choose life:”

We often find ourselves among those who have chosen to trash the great gallery of earth’s Maker, replacing it with our own creations. These new creations claim to be “for the greater good” and “bigger than life,” surpassing creation itself. Under this arrogant assault on the fabric of the biosphere, the “earth dries up and withers…The earth is defiled by its people” (Isaiah 24:4-5).

---


13 Ibid., 11-25.

14 Ibid., 31-39.

15 Ibid., 38.

16 Ibid.
God’s interactive relationship with humans is something DeWitt calls Christians to remember and act upon as they move through earthly life, which encompasses “the Lord’s promises to be our God,” and our “promise to honor God as his people,” including honoring the gift of creation.17 Viewing the natural environment as “a bag of resources,” does not honor God, and in fact, breaks our covenant with Him.18 “God’s plan of salvation is not to transport us to some disembodied spiritual place, but to restore and renew the creation…God’s saving purpose does not ignore the creation or leave it behind in a gigantic conflagration — but renews it,” says DeWitt.19 The “guarantor” of that future is Jesus Christ; Christians must “reclaim the stewardship of this creation in the light of the sheer physicality of salvation in the new creation.”20 It is in the Garden of Eden that the Bible introduces believers to responsible care of creation wherein ”The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Stewardship of creation “dynamically shapes and reshapes human behavior to sustain God’s creation,” concludes DeWitt, and believers are called as those made in God’s image to “care for and serve creation…on behalf of God.”21

Evangelical Christian ethicist David Gushee writes in his book, In the Fray, Contesting Christian Ethics, 1994-2013, that “climate change” is in his view “one of the

17 Ibid., 55.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 60.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 57.
graves t human challenges of the twenty-first century.”²² He tells of a debate with a con-
servative evangelical that reminded him “that an older version of ‘dominion theology’
still survives on the right. A particular reading of the ‘cultural mandate’ of Genesis 1
leads to the belief that creation was made for humanity and that our relationship with the
rest of the creatures is a relationship of rule.”²³ Gushee argues that while this theology
“made a whole lot more sense in a more primitive era in human history,” it does not to-
day, “thousands of years later, when we are straining the capacity” of creation.²⁴ Gushee
contends that for more than forty years efforts have been undertaken in biblical scholar-
ship examining resources that lead to a better theology of creation and of humanity in
creation:

Genesis 1 has been read to emphasize the connections with rather than isolation of
humanity from the rest of creation and the other creatures. Dominion has been
redefined as stewardship, management or creation care…The Noah story has been
reread as a parable for the human responsibility to care for an endangered cre-
ation…The theology of redemption has been recast as a divine plan to reclaim the
total wounded creation, and some are rediscovering an eschatological vision that
involves, as Jesus said, “the renewal of all things” rather than the destruction of
creation.²⁵

Gushee describes the hermeneutical conundrum as a multilayered issue, one that
draws not just upon interpretation, but upon human history:

This is a classic conundrum in theology but its contours now have a very different
shape in our own age. As theologians as diverse as Irving Greenberg, Dietrich

---

²² David P. Gushee, In the Fray, Contesting Christian Ethics, 1994-2013 (Eugene, Oregon: Cas-

²³ Ibid., 139.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 139-140.
Bonhoeffer and Larry Rasmussen noted in the twentieth century, it is clear that the exponential increase in human technological capacity since the Industrial Revolution means that we are now co-creators (or co-destroyers?) in a way never before possible in human history.²⁶

But the deeper issue, according to Gushee, is a “theology of divine sovereignty in which God ordains all that happens on the planet,” whether it is a nuclear holocaust or massive flooding from human-induced activities.²⁷ Morally and ethically, “thoughtful Christians need some very careful rethinking of what we mean by divine sovereignty and how we relate that to human responsibility.”²⁸ The issue of applying biblical hermeneutics within the context of modern life is problematic. For example, “Applying the majestic words of the primeval history in Genesis 9 to a particular aspect of the climate problem” can violate “canons of biblical interpretation and application in more ways than one can name.”²⁹ Gushee allows that any exegetical, theological and ethical developments in reinterpretting biblical texts require a degree of (re)discovering “previously ignored or overlooked scriptural materials,” as well as a “creative rethinking of sacred texts in light of new scientific discoveries” — discoveries which, he emphasizes, were made possible by God.³⁰ Ethically, Christians must be willing to “open our eyes to what is really going on in the world around us and to rethink our faith accordingly….We cannot function in a

---

²⁶ Ibid., 138.
²⁷ Ibid.
²⁸ Ibid.
²⁹ Ibid. Genesis 9 is the Covenant with Noah and his descendants, wherein God promises to never again destroy the earth by flood.
³⁰ Ibid., 149.
changing world that requires our best moral efforts with a construal of our faith that is frozen in amber. This kind of Christianity is a museum piece.”

DeWitt and Gushee are representative of the growing contingent of evangelical environmentalists who embrace creation care from a stewardship standpoint, and will be discussed in more depth in later chapters.

There is also a substantive body of work devoted to the historical perspective of evolving evangelical belief in general, especially with regard to the shifts between pre- and postmillennialism that have characterized evangelicals throughout history, including their involvement in the public square. Importantly for this thesis, David O. Moberg, writing as an evangelical social scientist in *The Great Reversal: Evangelism versus Social Concern, An Evangelical Perspective*, documents the “great reversal” evangelicals made in the early part of the twentieth century from (postmillennialist) social concern to (pre-millennialist) individual concern, as the social gospel became synonymous with liberalism and cracks began to appear between the progressive and conservative contingents. Writing forty years ago, Moberg postulated that twentieth century evangelicals were in the process of reversing the great reversal by revisiting Scripture and realizing “that the avoidance of social involvement” is no longer an option, because the consequence is spiritual “escapism” with “no relevance to the practical problems of life…” Moberg emphasizes the debilitation that results when Christians believe they must choose between

---

31 Ibid.

being activists, who attack entrenched social evils, or pietists, who emphasize a life of prayer, worship and personal evangelism.\textsuperscript{33} He argues that pietism and activism are interdependent, with the former being the root of Christian life, and the latter its fruit.\textsuperscript{34} The more recent literature reviewed for this thesis, as well as author interviews conducted with evangelicals, support Moberg’s perception of a postmillennial shift within evangelicalism, and its consequences for the creation care movement, which will be discussed in depth in later chapters.

In \textit{America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln}, historian and reformed evangelical Christian Mark Noll, provides a detailed historical narrative of evangelicals, including how American nationalism and theology were shaped by each other from Puritanism through the Civil War. Noll weaves social, theological and intellectual history together in a way that includes not only the religious leaders of the time, but populist and marginalized groups as well. The synthesis of post-Puritan Christianity, republicanism and common sense, are examined as the basis for the distinctively American ideology which eventually fed into development of the American civil religion (in related, but distinctive, northern and southern forms), which in turn influenced the development of evangelicalism in its present form.\textsuperscript{35} Noll traces the history of evangelicalism from the revolutionary era's melioristic optimism to the Civil War era's withdrawal from worldly things. The book’s emphasis is on the social causes and consequences of Ameri-

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 152.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

ca's version of evangelical Christianity, especially its power to help create a unified social order during the post-Revolutionary period. The effect of Jonathan Edwards, a forefather of evangelicalism discussed later in this thesis, is also explored in depth as his influence on the American religious landscape, including his role in the first Great Awakening and his Enlightenment mindset, provided a model for the integration of religion and society. More consequential to the ongoing evangelical debate over the nature of creation, is Noll’s identification of the “nature of evangelical Christianity” during the mid-nineteenth century, especially as it relates to scriptural interpretation:

Although identifiably evangelical churches by 1860 made up the vast majority of American congregations, these churches did not present a homogeneous faith. In fact, evangelicals fought each other over...how to interpret the Scriptures; over the definition of many Christian doctrines, including human free will, the atonement, eschatology, the meaning of the sacraments, and the nature of the church; over slavery and other social issues...and over every imaginable kind of personality conflict.

Evangelicals today still express disagreement over how to interpret Scripture, or how God should be worshipped, even though they are in agreement that the Bible is a unique revelation. However, Noll reminds us, “such varied expressions of personal conviction are the raw material from which general definitions of evangelicalism have been derived.” These “varied expressions” are illustrative of the increasing success that creation care has had within evangelicalism, especially among youth groups, which will be discussed later in this thesis.

---

36 Ibid., 87.
37 Ibid., 170.
38 Ibid., 173.
Historian and evangelical Christian George M. Marsden, in *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, presents a history of evangelicalism and fundamentalism that traces the intertwining of both, including the movements’ navigation between religion and culture through revivalism and pietism, as well as pre- and post-millennialist thought. Although conceived of as a distinctive movement, Marsden locates fundamentalism within evangelicalism, and the book examines how fundamentalists have responded to the social, intellectual, and religious crises of their time.\(^{39}\) Marsden emphasizes the “militancy” of fundamentalism as an anti-modernist conservative force, which is a major distinguishing characteristic from evangelicalism, but also stresses how fundamentalists in the early twentieth century “stood in an intellectual tradition that had the highest regard for one understanding of true scientific method and proper rationalism.”\(^{40}\)

In the present day, Marsden finds that evangelicalism and fundamentalism are “displaying stronger affinities to the American mainstream” than they did in the early twentieth century, with the “politicization of fundamentalistic evangelicalism in recent decades and its unexpected resilience as a political force” pointing to a “larger story in American culture, the weakening of the progressive modern scientific liberal consensus” that had developed during the first half of the twentieth century.\(^{41}\)

Evangelicals come in countless varieties and their cultural and political attitudes do not always correlate with their church affiliations or theologies. Many hold moderate views or remain apolitical…Nonetheless…the news in the decades


\(^{40}\) Ibid., 7.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 255.
since the 1960s is that a wide variety of evangelical traditions that earlier may have been thought of as culturally marginal...have been mobilized into a significant mainstream national political force that has shifted their center of gravity by adding a very “this-worldly” or “public” agenda.  

This resilience has consequences for the public square, especially for creation care activists who have their feet planted firmly in a stewardship-based, postmillennial stance, as they clash with “fundamentalistic” evangelicals who hew to a dominion philosophy, as is discussed later in this thesis.

Jose Casanova, in *Public Religions in the Modern World*, examines the evolution of political action within the Christian right in the twentieth century, focusing on a perceived shift from a pre- to postmillennial outlook, tracing the evangelical/fundamentalist movement through history, including the establishment of Protestantism as America’s public religion in the nineteenth century. Casanova looks at the new religious right in American society through three “disestablishments,” the first being the First Amendment's separation of church and state. The second is traced to events beginning with the Civil War and encompasses a long historical process, including the secularization of higher education in America and the loss of Protestant cultural hegemony over the public sphere of American civil society. More liberal evangelicals began to embrace the social gospel, while conservative fundamentalists withdrew from public life, preferring to work

---

42 Ibid., 236.


44 Ibid., 137.
on individual salvation. The third disestablishment was characterized by Protestantism losing its role in shaping American life and morality, as pluralism of values was embraced and accepted by a growing and increasingly diverse population. These disestablishments changed the very fabric of evangelicalism because they:

...brought about the secularization of public morality and the emergence of a pluralistic system of norms and forms of life. From the first to the third disestablishment, the interpretation of the First Amendment was progressively extended from the constitutional protection of the “free exercise of religion” to freedom of inquiry, thought, and speech; to freedom of conduct.

The pluralism that emerged from these social changes provided fertile ground for the political mobilization of the Christian right in the form of the Moral Majority, which radically changed how the right viewed their relationship with the outside, sinful world; they now had a moral imperative to reclaim their culture to “protect their lifeworld from external threats.” This was the point of conversion for fundamentalism from a private, otherworldly orientation to a public, this-worldly one. It was also instrumental in how the creation care movement developed in the public square, which is discussed in detail in later chapters.

Christian Smith, in *American Evangelicalism, Embattled and Thriving*, uses sub-cultural identity theory to examine how evangelicals interact with and influence secular

---

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 155.
47 Ibid., 145.
48 Ibid., 155.
49 Ibid., 156.
society. Smith’s theory posits that religion survives and can thrive in pluralistic, modern society by embedding itself in subcultures that offer satisfying morally orienting collective identities which provide adherents meaning and belonging. In a pluralistic society, religious groups such as evangelicals will be relatively stronger than others because they better possess and employ the cultural tools needed to create both clear distinction from, and significant engagement and tension with, other relevant outgroups. For example, fundamentalism shares evangelicalism’s distinctive identity, but not its “sustained, active presence in and engagement with the surrounding culture” and has therefore lost its vitality and influence. Likewise, mainline and liberal Protestantism’s “nearly complete en-culturation into the mainstream” has debilitated those groups to the point where they have lost any trace of Christian distinctiveness.

Smith argues that unlike fundamentalism or mainline Protestantism, traditional, orthodox evangelicalism endures not despite, but because of, the challenges and structures of a modern pluralistic environment. Ironically, his perception is that for all its strength, evangelicalism is ineffective in actually effecting social change due largely to the limitations of “personal influence strategy,” wherein change is sought through one-


\[51\] Ibid., 118.

\[52\] Ibid., 118-119.

\[53\] Ibid., 146.

\[54\] Ibid., 148.

\[55\] Ibid., 119.
on-one relationships rather than systematic and structural initiatives.\textsuperscript{56} He states that the social forces uniting people into a movement can also paradoxically undermine their attempts at effective social influence in the public square.\textsuperscript{57}

It should be noted that subsequent to the publication of Smith’s book in 1989, there have been many documented instances wherein evangelicals have taken to the “public square” on behalf of creation care, including influencing the passage of pro-environment legislation at local and Federal levels by working within existing government systems. These activities, as well as evangelicals’ ability to leverage one-on-one relationships into larger environmental initiatives, will be discussed in depth later in this thesis.

A small, but growing body of literature focusing on social-scientific research is also beginning to emerge that examines the factors influencing attitudes within theologically conservative Christian groups in general, specifically with regard to the politically-charged idea of climate change. This literature reveals a high level of skepticism among conservative evangelical leaders and laypersons, including how interactions between religious, political, cultural, and scientific beliefs intersect to shape views about anthropogenic climate change within a social context.\textsuperscript{58} Through an extensive review of existing research, Robin Globus Veldman, Andrew Szasz, and Randolph Haluza-DeLay, writing in the \textit{Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture}, document the response of world religions, including evangelical, to climate change mitigation initiatives. The over-

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 217.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

all consensus of their ambitious study is that, while the situation remains “fluid” and “more research is clearly needed to evaluate the impacts, strengths, and weaknesses” of these initiatives, the study team’s perception is that despite “enthusiasm in some quarters, denominational efforts are very uneven; there is not galvanized mass support at the grassroots level; and it does not appear that denominations have made much headway in terms of getting their congregants in developed countries to make dramatic personal lifestyle changes or to engage in more aggressive tactics such as lobbying or protesting.”

With regard to evangelicals, specifically, the study finds that efforts to mitigate climate change are “heading in the opposite direction.”

Wylie Allen Carr’s thesis, “The Faithful Skeptics: Conservative Christian Religious Beliefs and Perceptions of Climate Change,” (the published version of which was part of the Globus Veldman review), documents opinions on climate change based upon thirty-six interviews with a representative population of evangelical and fundamentalist pastors and laypersons in the Dallas, Texas area. The interviews reveal five religious beliefs that appeared to influence this conservative Christian group’s perception of climate change: biblical inerrancy, God’s sovereignty, human sinfulness, eschatology, and

59 Ibid., 262.

60 Ibid.

61 Wylie Allen Carr, 2010. “The Faithful Skeptics: Conservative Christian Religious Beliefs and Perceptions of Climate Change” (2010). Masters thesis, University of Montana. Thesis, Dissertations, Professional Papers. Paper 1013: 27. Carr found that most interviewees did not identify themselves as “evangelical” or “fundamentalist,” with the exception of four who did identify as fundamentalist. However, even among these four, other nomenclature was also used for self-identification including evangelical, reformed and conservative.
evangelism. Carr’s study illustrates how politicization of the term “climate change” can negatively impact perceptions of creation care for some interviewees. This includes skepticism of the science (and scientists, who were largely viewed as not believing in the Bible) purporting to show anthropogenic causes for climate change. However, the study also shows how “common belief interpretations contribute to skepticism of human-induced climate,” for some believers, while “alternative interpretations of these same beliefs promoted environmental concern and even acceptance of anthropogenic climate change” among others. For example, while the majority of interviewees (twenty-four individuals) expressed no or little concern about climate change, twenty-seven stated that based upon their religious beliefs, they believed they were supposed to take care of the earth, using the term “stewardship,” specifically, as a reflection of their respect for God. This variance in evangelical views, of a negative perception of climate change versus a more positive general concern for the environment from a creation care standpoint, will be examined throughout this thesis.

Katharine K. Wilkinson, a professed agnostic, in *Between God & Green: How Evangelicals Are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change*, also documents that evangelicals express an overall concern for the earth and the poor. Like Carr, however, she found that climate change was viewed with suspicion, in this case principally due to

---


63 Carr, Masters thesis, 137.

64 Carr, *Journal*, 276.

65 Carr Masters thesis, 144.
distrust in science and government regulation. Her book is based upon two years’ worth of interviews with major figures in what she calls the “climate care movement,” focus groups with lay evangelicals across the southeastern United States, and analysis of key documents produced by the creation care movement. Wilkinson’s research indicates that climate issues appear to have little resonance with laypeople because “it attempts to resonate with lay evangelicals’ existing values and beliefs while simultaneously trying to change them.”

However, a significant finding for this thesis is Wilkinson’s contention that a strategic fracture has occurred between evangelicals advocating climate change mitigation at a political level, often made up of leaders (grasstops), and on-the-ground advocacy in the laity focused on creation care (grassroots). Her contention is supported by Lydia Bean and Steven Teles in a New America paper, *Spreading the Gospel of Climate Change: An Evangelical Battleground*. Bean and Teles contend that the top-down approach to creation care failed to take off in the early 2000s, largely due to a failure to mobilize the evangelical base in the face of a powerful conservative backlash; the “trickle down” into the laity never happened. Wilkinson, Bean and Teles give surprisingly light treatment to the activities occurring amongst young evangelical leaders and laity, especially at universities and the community level. Bean and Teles’ paper also overlooks the ongoing and largely independent grassroots efforts in creation care that are having an in-

---


67 Ibid., 135.

institutional and legislative effect at local and Federal levels, all of which will be examined later in this thesis.

Laurel Kearns, in “Cooking the Truth: Faith, Science, the Market and Global Warming,” looks at religious groups’ claims to authority and strategies of action in the global warming debate, including how “pro” and “anti” global warming issues are framed in terms of religion, science, justice and a free market economy. She examines how beliefs are translated into action by grassroots groups through their “lived religious traditions and what they select within these traditions as a basis of authority for action, for interpreted or reconstructed ritual, and for motivation, hope and inspiration…” Kearns explores the strategies and actions chosen by these groups, and their relative success rate. Using evangelicals as a case study, Kearns outlines the major issues that this group has on both sides of the global warming issue: anti-global warming evangelical activists fear “new age” pantheism and a threat to free enterprise; pro-global warming evangelical activists fear that humans are disobeying scriptural mandates to make “godly, just and sustainable choices.” She also examines the religious framing of environmental issues, finding the “ability to pull together a constituency from various locales within the religious sphere is a significant part” of success on both sides. One of the most important aspects

---

69 Laurel Kearns, “Cooking the Truth: Faith, Science, the Market and Global Warming,” *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 100. Kearns defines “pro” global warming activists as those seeking to enlist U.S. citizens to put pressure on the government to legislate measures aimed at reducing the rate of global warming, such as reducing CO2 emissions and changing energy consumption habits; “anti” global warming activists are characterized as denying or downplaying the existence of global warming for a variety of reasons.

70 Ibid., 99.

71 Ibid., 116.
of religious framing is how environmentally-sound practices can affect a congregation’s bottom line monetarily, “in other words, although groups would like to convince people on purely ethical or scientific terms, it is often much easier to convince people to take the right and moral action when it makes good economic sense.” Kearns discusses the importance, on both sides, of finding safe spaces in which to engage in discussions on global warming, such as within a church, in which audiences will feel most comfortable. She also includes a caveat that “this somewhat cursory discussion does not give a full picture of all the activity that has been stimulated by religious global warming campaigns,” including activities by youth groups and congregations. She finds that “in the final analysis, ‘pro-global warming’ religious ecological activism has to be about both theology and action, changing beliefs and worldviews, and patterning action that fits those changed beliefs.” Evangelical activism on both sides of the environmental debate, including the role of youth groups and congregations, will be explored later in this thesis, as will be the importance of safe spaces in which to discuss creation care from a faith standpoint.

The research conducted by Globus Veldman, Carr, Wilkinson and Kearns would seem to illustrate an uncertain future for climate change mitigation efforts among evangelicals. However, the studies also indicate that more research with larger and more diverse populations is needed to determine the accuracy of this perception, especially as it relates to whether negative attitudes about politically-charged concepts like climate

72 Ibid., 107.
73 Ibid., 104.
74 Ibid., 123.
change or global warming are representative of attitudes about creation care in general. Also, more research focused on young evangelicals’ involvement in the climate debate is warranted, including a deep dive into environmental efforts at evangelical universities and seminaries as incubators for the next generation, which these studies did not include.

The “greening” of evangelicalism in general is also well documented and encompasses an ever-growing body of authorship, the majority of which interprets the Bible from a position of environmental stewardship, and which encourages believers to practice an ethic of creation care. Southern Baptist Jonathan Merritt, in Green Like God: Unlocking the Divine Plan for Our Planet, places creation within God, or “the One behind the environment. It is as much about the Creator as the creation.” Merritt, the son of a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention who was raised in a premillennialist Southern Baptist tradition, was not always a believer in creation care. He had an epiphany during a class at Southeastern Baptist Seminary wherein he realized that destroying creation was “like tearing pages out of the Bible.” In this book, he addresses the concern of many evangelicals that caring for the environment "distracts us from more important tasks" such as the “true mission” of spreading the gospel. Echoing Moberg’s creed re-

75 There are dozens of excellent sources on the greening of evangelicalism, too many to cite here. Several more authors include evangelical climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe and husband Andrew Farley (A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for Faith-Based Decisions. New York: FaithWords, 2009); Jim Ball (Global Warming and the Risen Lord. Washington, DC: Evangelical Environmental Network, 2010); and Laurel Kearns (various).


77 Ibid., 2.

78 Ibid., 89.
garding the interdependence of pietism and activism, Merritt responds that creation care is a gospel issue:

We aren’t forced to choose between sharing the gospel and creation care. It is a false dichotomy. Both are possible. The very fact that the Bible tells us to do both indicates that evangelism and creation care can simultaneously be done well. A vital part of the Great Commission reaches beyond making converts to making disciples and teaching them to observe all God commands, including the very first commands to steward the earth.79

Regarding evangelizing, Merritt recounts evidence from the “mission field” wherein, “our missionaries don’t begin with Jesus, whom some foreigners know nothing about. They begin with creation (and its Creator), which we know communicates with everyone.”80 He counters the premillennialist eschatological argument of “the world’s going to be destroyed anyway,” with "the knowledge of a returning Master does not free us from our earthly obligations; it calls us to them.”81 In response to believers who fear being absorbed into, or otherwise capitulating to, an Al Gore-inspired “tree hugging secular liberalism,” Merritt avers that the “‘radical left’ has commandeered environmentalism largely because the ‘far right’ relinquished the moral high ground long ago in its exclusive pursuit of other issues.”82 He divorces politics from the creation care issue because he believes caring for the planet is a human issue, not a political one. Above all, Merritt calls evangelicals to action on behalf of God’s creation, such as reigning in overconsump-

79 Ibid., 90. The most well known version of the Great Commission is found in Matthew 28:16-20, wherein the resurrected Jesus Christ instructs his disciples to spread his teachings to all the nations of the world. Other versions of the Great Commission are found in Mark 16:14–18, Luke 24:44–49, Acts 1:4–8, and John 20:19–23.

80 Ibid., 90-91.

81 Ibid., 89.

82 Ibid., 85.
tion and inefficient waste practices, asserting that evangelicals can maintain, and en-
hance, their values by protecting the earth. The Southern Baptists’ evolving participa-
tion in creation care efforts will be explored later in this thesis.

Evangelical activist Mitch Hescox and meteorologist Paul Douglas in *Caring for
Creation: An Evangelical’s Guide to Climate Change and a Healthy Environment*, seek to
connect the dots between faith and science, while showing Christians how to take the
lead in caring for the planet. Douglas acknowledges that science alone will not create the
change in lifestyle required to mitigate environmental degradation:

Science has many answers, but in the end, its high priests can only peel away at
the infinite onion. There’s impermanence to the scientific method; one never quite
reaches solid bedrock. There’s always a new observation, a new discovery, a radic-
al theory, more testing to do. We look at the universe through a pinhole as God
gradually reveals himself to us…there are no absolutes in a laboratory.

However, believing that climate change is occurring “…isn’t about belief or opinion. It’s
about acknowledging the data, taking time to understand the science…and making deci-
sions based upon the best available evidence.”

Hescox links creation care with right to life issues, because “as evangelicals, we
want children to be born healthy, unhindered by the ravages of pollution even before they
take their first breath,” and he cites peer reviewed medical research showing the impact

---

83 Ibid., 136-137.

Change and a Healthy Environment* (Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 2016), 89-90.

85 Ibid., 91.
of environmental toxins, such as volatile organic compounds, on the unborn.\textsuperscript{86} As one of the most active creation care advocates in the United States, Hescox believes that evangelicals and other Christians often act like “good ‘church’ folk who walked by the injured man instead of the outcast who stopped to help.”\textsuperscript{87} But, he remains optimistic that “by working together with God as our guide, we can rebuild our land,” including developing new sources of energy that will support jobs.\textsuperscript{88} The authors offer what they call concrete steps to move the needle forward on mitigating environmental problems, including expanding individual horizons beyond the self; rewarding efficiency by removing all subsidies for renewables and fossil fuels; allowing the market decide what rises to the top; supporting a price on carbon pollution; acknowledging that climate issues are not a “liberal” issue; and electing politicians who respect science. The relationship between creation care and science, and evangelical involvement in the politics of carbon pricing, will be discussed in later chapters.

Ben Lowe, who wrote \textit{Green Revolution: Coming Together for Creation}, as a twenty-something author, underscores the importance of involving the current and younger generations of Christians in environmental stewardship activism:

Youth groups are a key component of the movement because this is where discipleship starts for many of us. What we learn here helps lay our faith foundation

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 39. According to the RISCTOX website, a European Union-supported database providing information on more than 100,000 chemical agents, accessed February 26, 2017, \url{http://risctox.istas.net/en/index.asp?idpagina=621}, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are hydrocarbons that become volatile (gas form) at room temperature. VOCs are liberated during fuel combustion processes (transportation is one of the main emitters of VOC) and also result from the burning of wood, carbon, natural gas, solvents, paints, adhesives, plastic compounds and additives in industrial processes.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 142.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 141.
and build a Christian framework for interpreting and changing the world around us. They also often wield untapped potential for influencing church policy, priorities and practices…

Lowe is an activist involved with several creation care organizations, including serving as national spokesperson for Young Evangelicals for Climate Action (YECA), one of the most quickly growing and influential evangelical environmental youth groups in the nation. Lowe’s grasp and acceptance of climate change science is one of the drivers behind his zeal, but he characterizes the current environmental crisis not as a technical problem, but a spiritual one. Using community organizing on college campuses as case studies, Lowe illustrates how small efforts can make a big difference if there is a communal intention as Christians. He exhorts believers to move from insulation to incarnation, from safety to sacrifice, “rejoicing in the ultimate reality that every step closer to God and his kingdom is supremely worth the effort.”

Lowe’s spiritual emphasis is on injustice, and how it is responsible for humankind’s bad relationship with God, with each other, and with the environment. Lowe believes creation care is inherently a justice issue that will bring peace (shalom) to God’s creation, and that as individuals and as a community, evangelicals must understand the comity necessary between the secular and religious spheres, including the necessity for education, mandates, peer pressure, economics and morality as “levers of change.”

---


90 Ibid., 66.

91 Ibid., 28.

92 Ibid., 102-103.
role of justice issues in creation care will be explored in depth in later chapters, including
the degree to which young evangelicals like Lowe are moving the ball forward.

Evangelical E. Calvin Beisner in *Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical
Entry into the Environmental Debate*, presents a dominion view of environmentalism that
serves as a negative critique to stewardship perspectives that attribute value to creation
beyond its usefulness for humanity. Beisner acknowledges that “it is entirely appropriate
that evangelicals should join this discussion” on environmental issues, as evangelicals
“have special insights — theological, historical, and cultural — that enable us to con-
tribute positively to environmental debate and discussion.” However, he argues that the
Bible is clear on the role of humans on the earth: “Both the dominion mandate and the
simple fact of human intelligence make human rule of the earth inescapable. How that
rule will be exercised and to what end is is a matter for careful exploration.” The book
explores the various ways man must be accountable to God in how he exercises this rule,
but always within the hierarchy of man over every other living creature.

A professed skeptic of climate change science, Beisner articulates the “hazards of
developing an ethic of environmental stewardship,” stating that “humility” ought to dis-
suade humans from undertaking any effort at managing the earth’s ecosystems because

---

93 E. Calvin Beisner, *Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental
Debate* (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, 1997), xi.
94 Ibid., 27.
95 Ibid., 103.
we do not know enough about them. Further, he believes creation care advocates have lost sight of the *imago Dei*, which has caused them to lose their spiritual moorings:

Environmentalism — in non-Christian circles at least, but all too often even among evangelicals — starts off on the wrong foot, denigrating mankind, denying the *imago Dei*. It sees man chiefly as a consumer, not producer. And because it does, it concludes that he is exhausting the resources of the earth.

The book rebuts as “environmental misinformation,” every ecological issue on the environmentalist agenda, including climate change, fossil fuel depletion, air and water pollution, deforestation, and species extinction. Overpopulation, for example, is not an issue that needs to be rectified, environmentally or otherwise:

The human race is not the population explosion but the population blossom; not the population boom but the population bloom; not people pollution but the people solution; not cancer but an answer....Scripture...does not say “Then God cursed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number,’” but “Then God blessed them...fill the earth.”

Beisner believes that three characteristics — holiness, knowledge and creativity — should be employed by man in “fulfilling the vocation God gave us: to rule over the earth (Gen. 1:26). For while ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it...’ (Ps. 24:1-2),” God has entrusted the rule of the earth to mankind. Beisner’s role as the voice of dominionism, and the effect of the dominion perspective on the trajectory of the creation care movement, is examined in future chapters.

---

96 Ibid., 28.
97 Ibid., 102.
98 Ibid., 59-80.
99 Ibid., 103.
100 Ibid.
Overall, there is a less defined body of literature focused on one of the most critical areas that will determine the future of creation care within the evangelical population: greening at evangelical seminaries and universities. There is no way to definitively determine whether young evangelicals are more affected by secular culture or by Scripture in their beliefs on creation care, but there are indications that there is a synergy between them. James Davidson Hunter in *Evangelicalism: the Coming Generation*, provides a baseline for this synergy in his study of sixteen institutions (nine liberal arts colleges and seven evangelical seminaries), wherein he examines trends in conservative Protestantism’s conflict with modernism with regard to the shifting meaning of faith; work, morality and the self; the family ideal; politics and the role of tradition. Hunter found that young evangelicals were ambivalent about key points of conservative belief, such as biblical inerrancy or science, and indicated that these changes may signify a decline in, or redefinition of, religious orthodoxy:

The sentiment among the coming generation, then is mixed. It is clear that they know what they “should” believe but with that they struggle. Intellectually grasping the soteriological demands of orthodox Christianity is one matter; emotionally accepting them is quite another…there appears to be wide recognition that it is socially problematic as well.101

Hunter's book suggests that students attending evangelical colleges were becoming increasingly secularized as a result of increasing cultural pluralism and higher education. Although environmentalism is not specifically addressed per se, Hunter found that with regard to social justice issues (a primary cause for today’s creation care activists),

---

young evangelicals were responsible for some of the momentum behind a significant increase in rhetoric supporting social ministry between 1970-1980.\textsuperscript{102} Much of the infrastructure for this movement was “social action-oriented,” and supported by organizations like Evangelicals for Social Action, which was in the forefront of the creation care movement, as will be discussed in later chapters.\textsuperscript{103}

In a follow up study to Hunter looking at the same institutions, entitled \textit{Evangelicalism: the Next Generation}, James M. Penning and Corwin Smidt, argue that Hunter’s study suffers significant shortcomings, one of which is that it was “cross-sectional” and therefore could provide only a snapshot of students’ attitudes at a single point in time, another being that he did not compare the attitudes of students attending evangelical colleges with the attitudes of older evangelicals who were similarly educated.\textsuperscript{104} The conclusion of the follow up study is opposite of what Hunter argued, i.e., Penning and Smidt determined that today’s students are not less orthodox in their religious beliefs (they may be even more so), nor have they lost their faith.\textsuperscript{105} However, the study also illustrates the trajectory of young evangelicals’ increasing support of social gospel issues, with fifty percent favoring the use of government programs to address social problems, and forty-

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 42.

\textsuperscript{104} James M. Penning and Corwin E. Smidt, \textit{Evangelicalism: The Next Generation} (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI, 2002), 43-68.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 174.
four percent supporting greater environmental protection even at the expense of costing jobs or raising prices.\textsuperscript{106}

Aaron Routhe in “Reading the Signs of Sustainability in Christian Higher Education: Symbolic Value Claims or Substantive Organizational Change?” focuses his study on the specific issue of whether greening is occurring on evangelical college campuses. Routhe conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of whether and how evangelical universities are engaged in greening their curricula and campuses. Using the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) as a case study, Routhe found that assessing institutional involvement is inherently tricky due to several factors including: underreporting of environmental initiatives, dissimilar nomenclature to describe sustainability efforts which result in confusion about what is actually going on, and organizational/institutional limits on initiating and maintaining sustainability efforts on campus.\textsuperscript{107} For example, signals of greening from institutionalized data reporting sources show a weak degree of greening, but stronger signals of greening are found through surveys of student-led religious environmental organizations.\textsuperscript{108} The role of young evangelicals, including greening activities at universities and the interaction of youth with secular culture, will be explored in depth in later chapters.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 122.


\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 35.
Gaps in the Literature

Several important gaps in the literature warrant further study, and will be examined in this thesis. First, there is a dearth of information illustrating how a shift from pre-millennial to postmillennial belief is specifically impacting evangelical environmental views. A central point of this shift is the (re)interpretation of Scripture to reflect a stewardship perspective, rather than one based in dominion, which DeWitt, Gushee and many others have examined. However, the overall larger picture of how a postmillennial outlook is affecting evangelicals’ way of being and acting in the world deserves further study.

Second, evangelical influence on pro-environmental policy in the United States, which has often included issues related to climate change, has not received a high degree of scrutiny. This is surprising given the action-oriented nature of evangelicals, and the considerable power they have wielded politically since the Moral Majority's foray into the political process that influenced President Ronald Reagan's election in 1980.

Third, the degree to which evangelical universities and seminaries are embracing the idea of creation care is just beginning to be examined. The institutional focus on environmental issues, whether in curricula or general greening of campus life, will have an impact how the next generation views their relationship with the natural world, including actions taken on behalf of God’s creation. With regard to seminaries, especially, an increased focus on creation care will impact the topics making their way from the pulpit to the pews. As incubators for the next generation of evangelical leaders and congregants,
seminaries and universities will be key in determining whether stewardship of the earth becomes part of an evangelical moral ethic that transcends political boundaries of “conservative” or “liberal.”

The largest information gap, however, is quantifying and connecting environmental activity between and among the grassroots, state and Federal levels, and how these activities feed into legislative initiatives at all levels. Several authors (such as Bean, Teles, Wilkinson, Kearns and Gushee) have written about how and why creation care leadership seemed to fail at delivering a mandate, including disconnects between green evangelical leadership and the laity. However, the largely undocumented efforts at local and state levels, as well as the ongoing efforts behind the scenes at the Federal level and how these efforts are affecting environmental policy beyond the well-known lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill, warrant further examination.

What the Data Say

In terms of quantitative data regarding what being an evangelical means, there are various sources that claim primacy in terms of accurate representation. The most recent United States Religious Landscape Study from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life indicates that more than a quarter of the population self-identify as evangelical. A 2015 PRRI survey identifies white evangelical Protestants as one of the nation's three dominant religious traditions; however, the organization's polling puts evangelicals at

---

109 Pew website, accessed January 15, 2016, http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/. Specifically, 25.4% of the U.S. population self-identify as evangelical. Released in 2015, the 2014 United States Religious Landscape Study from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life is the most recent available as of this writing, and only the second such study since 2007.
only eighteen percent of the American population. 110 Such variability among different polling organizations may be due to the employment of different methodologies and differently worded questions about religious identity. 111 For example, Barna showed thirty-eight percent of the American public self-identifying as evangelical, which dropped to eight percent when Barna used a very specific nine-point survey that did not allow for self-identification. 112 Regardless of these differences, however, disparate independent polling organizations do tend to illustrate similar trends over time (such as the relative stability of evangelicals as a group despite declining numbers of mainline Protestantism, as well as remaining the nation’s largest religious group), and therefore remain the most dependable quantifiable data available. 113

More challenging is finding information that is representative of how evangelicals view themselves and their relationship with the natural environment, although there are data upon which to draw. Polling data from various organizations over the past decade or


111 For a detailed breakdown of how different surveys result in varied outcomes regarding religious affiliation, see Pew’s “Appendix C: Putting Findings From the Religious Landscape Study Into Context,” accessed December 13, 2016, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/appendix-c-putting-findings-from-the-religious-landscape-study-into-context/. Another informative example of note: according to Gallup’s website, accessed December 13, 2016, http://www.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx, recent aggregate data indicate 44% of the American public self-identifying as born again or evangelical, but when asked to specify whether they believed that the Bible was the literal word of God — a hallmark of evangelical belief — the percentage dropped to as low as 22%. Other polling data over time provides an indication of how evangelical identification varies greatly depending upon the criteria used and questions asked, as shown in a 2006 Baylor Religion Survey, accessed December 13, 2016, http://www.baylor.edu/mediacommunications/index.php?id=93052, which posited that more than a third of Americans were evangelical based upon affiliation.


so help to quantify, in a general sense, how evangelicals view themselves and their relationship with the natural world.\textsuperscript{114}

Michigan University’s Center for Local, State and Urban Policy found an increase in Americans’ belief that global warming is a real phenomenon, with the most notable gain overall among evangelical Christians, whose belief that global warming is real rose sixteen points from forty-nine percent in Spring, 2015, to sixty-five percent in Fall, 2015.\textsuperscript{115} Significantly, the same study showed a substantial increase over a two-year period in the number of evangelicals who agree that the United States has a moral obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, from forty-five percent in 2013, to sixty-eight percent in 2015, only two percentage points under the national average.\textsuperscript{116} However, PRRI results showed that, when taken as a group, evangelicals are less concerned with the health of the natural environment than any other religious group, with white evangelical Protestants most likely to be climate change skeptics, with seventy-seven percent tending to attribute the severity of recent natural disasters to biblical end times, not climate

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{114} Over the past decade, data collection organizations have variously used the terms “global warming” and “climate change” when conducting surveys. This thesis encompasses both terms when comparing survey data because both terms are variously and sometimes simultaneously used by scientific data collection and analysis organizations (e.g., from National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Energy), over the past decade to make environmental assessments.


\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 5.
\end{flushright}
change, according to a 2014 survey.\textsuperscript{117} Pew’s 2014 data regarding the percentage of evangelicals who believe there is scientific consensus on climate change jibes with the Michigan 2013 findings on evangelical belief in global warming, with Pew surveys showing forty-seven percent of evangelicals believing that there is scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change.\textsuperscript{118} A 2012 pre-election Barna survey showed that environmental concerns ranked last among likely evangelical voters, with barely one out of five (twenty-two percent) saying the environment was an issue of top concern to them, compared to thirty-one percent of all other likely voters surveyed.\textsuperscript{119} Evangelicals, according to Barna’s surveys through time, are historically the “least concerned segment among more than fifty population groups studied.”\textsuperscript{120}

Given that survey and polling data appear relative to the organization doing the polling, the audience polled, the questions asked and how they are phrased, as well as the perceived economic health of the nation, it is difficult to measure with any degree of quantitative accuracy what the future holds for evangelicals and creation care. So an examination of other, qualitative factors is necessary, including looking at the interactions

\textsuperscript{117} PRRI website, accessed January 16, 2016, \url{http://www.prri.org/research/believers-sympathizers-skeptics-americans-conflicted-climate-change-environmental-policy-science/}. According to PRRI, 27\% of white evangelical Protestants are climate change believers, while 29\% are sympathizers and nearly 4-in-10 (39\%) are skeptics. The percentage of white evangelical Protestants to attribute the severity of recent natural disasters to the biblical “end times” is 77\%, versus climate change at 49\%. Comparatively, 23\% of all Americans say that climate change is a crisis and 36\% say it is a major problem.


\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
and activities (political and otherwise) of key individuals involved with creation care who represent the left, center and right of the movement.
The main issues involving evangelicals and environmentalism include the difference of opinion regarding whether Scripture reveals a creation care mandate, and if so, what exactly is the mandate? To understand the evolution of creation care in the United States, including the politicization of the concept, it is first necessary to understand how and why evangelicalism itself evolved in America, especially the fractures within the movement that have led to such incongruous beliefs regarding humans’ relationship with the environment. Much, if not all, of the disagreement regarding creation care stems from differing Scriptural interpretations, from Genesis through Revelation, that are based upon a premillennial versus postmillennial viewpoint.¹

The traditional premillennial view is that Christ will return before the millennial age, and only after the world experienced extraordinary tribulation and evil, including the appearance of the anti-Christ.² In this scenario, Christ would destroy the anti-Christ and believers would be raised from the dead, after which there would follow a literal thousand years of peace over which Christ would reign with his saints. At the close of this time, the forces of evil would once again be loosed, the wicked would then be raised, and a final judgment would take place.³ The postmillennial perspective is that the book of

1 Several of the most referenced biblical passages include: Genesis 1-3, 6, 9; Leviticus 25:3-5; Deuteronomy 10:14; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Job 38; Psalm 1, 19, 24, 65, 96, 104; Isaiah 11, 24, 35, 40, 42, 55, 65; Jeremiah 4; Hosea 4, Matthew 6; Mark 4; John 1, 4, 15; Romans 8; Ephesians 1; Colossians 1; 1 Corinthians 8; 2 Corinthians 5; 1 John 4; Revelation 4, 21, 22. (Specific passages of each from the New Revised Standard Version may be found in the Appendix).


3 Ibid.
Revelation is being fulfilled in the present era and is clearing the way for a golden age of one thousand years, in which the Holy Spirit would be poured out and the gospel would be spread worldwide; Christ would return after this millennial age and bring history to an end by saving all believers.4

Prior to the crisis of the post-Civil War era, premillennial and postmillennial belief did not differ greatly; both belief systems saw history controlled by a cosmic struggle, both interpreted some biblical prophecies literally, and both thought that some prophecies were already being fulfilled by current events.5 The two notable exceptions were that premillennialists tended to be less hopeful about American progress, and more prone to a literal interpretation of Scripture.6 A brief illustration of both perspectives follows.

Brief History of Pre- and Postmillennialism

The advancement of evangelicalism in the United States is the result of a long and convoluted history of disparate movements in Protestantism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although environmentalism as it is understood today was not part of the evangelical mindset during the Great Awakenings, the personalization of the religious experience and emphasis on social issues during the Awakenings did become integral parts of the creation care framework, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

4 Marsden, Fundamentalism, 49. Notably, pre- and postmillennialists interpret differently Revelation 20, “The Thousand Years.”

5 Ibid., 51.

6 Ibid.
“Evangelicalism” as a religious tradition in America began in the 1730s-40s with the first Great Awakening. Its roots stem in part from seventeenth century German Pietism, a reform movement within Lutheranism which focused on the conversion and regeneration of the “inner” person and the belief that such an experience was necessary for salvation. Another influence was Calvinism, brought to America by the Puritans in the early seventeenth century, with its emphases on predestination and belief that God rules over all things in accordance with the Puritan interpretation of Scripture, God, humanity and salvation. A third inspiration was Methodism in the tradition of George Whitefield and the brothers John and Charles Wesley, whose emphasis on holiness and sanctification were paramount in evangelicals’ personalization of their faith.

American evangelicalism’s genesis in the first Great Awakening was characterized by revivalism, which introduced a new emotional intensity into Calvinism inspired by Pietism. Passionate orators such as Whitefield, the Wesley brothers and Jonathan Edwards preached at community meetings around the country, and focused on an emotional and personal commitment to Christ, as opposed to the religious ritual, ceremony and doctrine that was typical of traditional Protestantism. The result was an intensely personal spiritual experience for the average person, something that would continue to epitomize

---

8 Marsden, *Fundamentalism, passim.*
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 44.
the evangelical experience in the United States through modern times, including the evolution of creation care.

A second Great Awakening occurred a century later in the late eighteenth to early/mid nineteenth century. According to Christian political activist and writer Jim Wallis, this religious movement was intertwined with serious social issues including abolition, women’s rights and all the complex issues which fed into the Civil War. With its strong populist appeal celebrated and supported through enthusiastic revivals, its emphasis on an individual's ability to change his/her circumstances for the better, and its optimistic assertion that salvation was open to all human beings who embraced Christ, the second Great Awakening and its social gospel message resulted in the Christianization of America and the eventual dominance of evangelicalism (in a broad sense) over the American religious landscape. The revival movement’s emphasis on social justice issues, in particular, became a hallmark of the creation care ethic and will be discussed later in this thesis.

The core tenets of evangelicalism during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were fairly straightforward: 1) preaching and believing in the gospel, and, 2) education with a moral basis, which included Scottish Common Sense Realism upon which

---

11 Various dates are associated with the Second Great Awakening according to different sources, but all seem to fall within this timeframe.
Baconian inductive reasoning was built. Presbyterian pastor Arthur Pierson succinctly summed up the evangelical mindset during this time when voicing his criticism against the Aristotelian method of reason. He much preferred Francis Bacon's system, which had at its center the Second Coming: "...a Baconian system...first gathers the teachings of the word of God, then seeks to deduce some general law along which the facts can be arranged." However, the nineteenth century also heralded the conflict that would consume evangelicalism for the better part of the twentieth century and which profoundly affected spiritual beliefs with regard to the natural environment, i.e., the rise of “higher criticism” and the theory of evolution, which challenged the validity of the biblical account of creation and history. The crisis of the post-Civil War years created a polarization between liberal and conservative evangelicals, with the former gradually letting go of many supernatural beliefs that lay beyond ordinary experience, or at the very least positioning the supernatural within the natural. This type of normativism, wherein modern culture provided context for interpreting or reinterpreting Scripture (evident in the hermeneutics of today’s progressive evangelicals regarding climate change) was the opposite of previous evangelical belief where the Bible served as a guide to understanding

---

14 Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 14-16. Common Sense provided the empirical foundation for "science," as it supported the affinity between scientific conclusions and the assertion of traditional, biblical faith. It was assumed that the universe was governed by a rational system of laws guaranteed by an all-wise and benevolent creator; the function of science was to discover such laws that were assumed to exist in all areas (like Newton's laws of physics).

15 Ibid., 56. Induction implies drawing knowledge from the natural world through experimentation, observation, and testing of hypotheses (vs. evolution which was considered theoretical).

16 Ibid., *passim.*
culture. Postmillennialism, which became the prevalent view among evangelicals between the Revolutionary and Civil War periods, had helped to provide the framework for this approach to secularization, and had been promoted by influential people such as Jonathan Edwards during the second Great Awakening. Christians who embraced Darwinism saw religion as something individually spiritual, and not necessarily in conflict with science. Henry Ward Beecher, one of the most popular Protestant orators of the time, exemplified this progressive spirit with his emphasis on social gospel issues such as abolition and suffrage, as he "preached a gospel of virtuous wealth as a commendable moral example to the poor." Beecher and his supporters used romanticism to drive home the point that religion was the interpretation of God through human experiences, believing that even Scripture should be subordinated to the authority of the modern age, lest it (and Christianity itself) become irrelevant, a concept that some of the most progressive believers in creation care continue to embrace. The fact that America had won the Revolutionary War, was experiencing a golden age of scientific, technological and social advancement in the years leading up to the Civil War, and, in general, was experiencing a significant degree of optimism and progress, led many Americans to believe that the success of their nation was a sign of God’s kingdom come. This postmillennial public reli-

---

17 Ibid., 50-51. Within evangelical Protestantism there was also an internal racial cleavage between black and white denominations, which also prevented any cultural hegemony. Text in parentheses is author’s.

18 Ibid., 23.

19 Ibid., 24-26.

20 Ibid., 49.
gious dimension – expressed through a set of beliefs, symbols and rituals that evolved from the duality of biblical spirituality and secularized nationalism – resulted in what sociologist Robert Bellah has described as the American civil religion, and it would become an indelible part of the nation's religious landscape.²¹

However, the nineteenth century also signaled the beginning of a new premillennialism that came to fruition among more conservative believers. Characterized by dispensationalism and a literal interpretation of the Bible, premillennialists believed that the kingdom of God was supernatural and lay wholly in the future, and that the entirety of human history could be separated into various historical eras (dispensations) that aligned with biblical description.²² It was at this point that evangelical unity was beginning to dissolve, as progressives like Beecher moved to the postmillennialist left, and conservatives moved farther to the right, often forming alliances centered on premillennialism.

During this time (1870s-90s) Dwight L. Moody, a transitional figure in transitional time, built the new revivalist empire that served as the basis for what became known as fundamentalism.²³ The movement maintained a critical distinction between the supernat-


²² Marsden, Fundamentalism, 51. Author’s note: there are various interpretations regarding the number of dispensations recounted in the Bible; the Scofield Bible mentions seven.

²³ Jose Casanova, Public Religions, 145. Other luminaries such as John Nelson Darby, Charles G. Finney and William B. Riley are consistently referenced in the literature as important to the evangelical movement, but Moody as a catalyst for change in the United States was paramount.
ural and natural, with biblical inerrancy reigning supreme. A dispensational premillennial revivalist who emphasized the positive love of God over hellfire and brimstone, Moody stressed the teachings of holiness and individual salvation using the Keswick teachings in England as his model: as long as Christ dwelt within a believer's heart, a Christian could be free from committing any known sin. Although Moody shunned controversy and any type of militancy of the type frequently associated with modern fundamentalism, he was determined that nothing would get in the way of true evangelism and soul-saving, which he viewed as more essential than any number of good deeds.

Moody's influence was also evident in the emerging coalition of the first fundamentalists between the late nineteenth century through the beginning of World War I. Along with the growth in premillennialism, there was also increasing discord in America regarding the relationship of religion and culture, not the least of which was due to fear of German "barbarism" (which for fundamentalists had Darwinian overtones), as well as Russian Bolshevism during the post-war years. The fear instilled in the American public

---

24 Biblical inerrancy was a hallmark of Princeton Theology, particularly the teachings of Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, J. Gresham Machen and B.B. Warfield, which attempted to balance the intellectual and emotional elements of Christian faith.

25 Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 77-80. The assumption being that if Christ was in one’s heart then there was no excuse for tolerating any sinful habit. The original Keswick teachers under H.W. Webb-Peploe objected to the Wesleyan view of eradicating sin in this life because it would lead to trust in Self instead of God. However, they also rejected as too weak the simple suppression of sin, as it would lead to tolerance of a sinful nature. Rather, to be victorious over sin (but never totally without sin), one must constantly maintain and renew their state of holiness through repeated "emptyings" by consecration and "fillings" with the Holy Spirit.

26 Moody’s belief system was institutionalized through the Moody Bible Institute, founded in 1886, which was developed to help future evangelists learn the skills necessary to carry on the revivalist tradition in urban areas, serving to bridge the gap between clergy and laity. The MBI continues to serve as a model for conservative Christian-oriented teaching through the present day.

27 Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 147-152.
during this era cannot be overstated; the entirety of the American (Christian) way of life was believed to be jeopardized by non-Christian outsiders (as well as modernists), and war had now become a godly cause in America's civil religion.

Moody and his protégé Reuben A. Torrey exemplified this tension somewhat within fundamentalism itself, with the former placing emphasis on religion of the heart, the latter emphasizing Christianity as a religion of the mind, although both were in agreement on the primacy of winning souls to Christ. The *Scofield Reference Bible*, first published in 1909, was imbued with Moody's teachings and became the most influential statement of dispensational premillennialism of the time. However, *Scofield* also championed much of the same ideology found in the subsequently published tome, *The Fundamentals* (1910-1915), which "showed remarkable restraint in promoting the more controversial aspects" of dispensationalism. By 1925, northern Presbyterian and northern Baptist denominations were centers of anti-modernism, and *The Fundamentals* was widely considered to be the foundation of modern Christian fundamentalism, even though it

---

28 Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 44. Torrey assigned great importance to ideas, and represented part of the major organizing force of fundamentalism, including arguments against the encroachment of modernism. Marsden says that Torrey's approach to dispensationalism represents "the most distinctive intellectual product of emerging fundamentalism," and was one of the "principal architects of fundamentalist thought," whereas Moody relied upon an emotional and personal spiritual connection.


30 Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 118-119. *The Fundamentals*, a set of ninety essays written by 64 different Protestant authors (edited in later years by Torrey), affirmed conservative Protestant beliefs and became a symbolic point of reference for identifying a fundamentalist movement that rebutted liberal ideas, mainly in the areas of Darwinian evolution, higher criticism, and supernaturalism.
did not include the more controversial aspects of conservative belief such as dispensationalism or premillennialism.\(^{31}\)

The years 1920-1925 were critical developmental years for fundamentalism, and included numerous benchmarks such as the coining of the word "fundamentalism" itself in 1920, Harry Emerson Fosdick's influential 1922 sermon rebutting fundamentalism entitled "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?," J. Gresham Machen's prolific writings that critiqued theological modernism, and the Auburn Affirmation, which was the culmination of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy. The most famous point of reference during this time occurred in 1925 during the deliberately staged Scopes Trial, which, as the first American trial to be broadcast on national radio, widely publicized the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, and left much of America with the impression that fundamentalism represented a provincial, backwards way of thinking. Although American fundamentalism had begun in the North, the movement became most popular in the South, especially among Southern Baptists.\(^ {32}\) Subsequent to Scopes, the national media (as well as most of America) came to identify fundamentalism as a southern manifestation.

Regardless of fundamentalist or modernist belief at this point in history, both sides were historically aligned against the common enemy of liberalism, which was vitally important during the post-World War I crisis leading into the 1920s-1930s (especially after the fallout from Scopes), as the fundamentalist movement quietly moved under-

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 119.

ground and began building a network of Bible colleges, missionary organizations, day
schools and social groups. At this time, the more militant fundamentalists began to sepa-
rate into their own churches, not only as a reaction against biblical criticism and other
aspects of modernism, but against the influx of immigrants who were literally changing
the face (and ideology) of America.

The current debate on the merits of creation care within evangelicalism typifies
the same type of faith-versus-culture anxiety found in those nineteenth and early twenti-
eth century disputes: fear of encroaching secularism and a perceived destruction of tradi-
tional Christian ideology. Conservative and progressive evangelicals, polarized along pre-
and postmillennial lines, continue to employ an arsenal of hermeneutic weapons — such
as sermons and written missives that are subsequently shared in mainstream media, on
social media and in lay publications — all claiming to know the “truth” about God’s ex-
pectations for environmental stewardship.

In a general sense, a conservative eschatology continues to be associated with a
negative perspective towards environmentalism across the board. The conception of
“stewardship,” for example, has traditionally bent more towards dominion over the envi-

33 Marsden, *Fundamentalism, passim*. After the Scopes Trial, fundamentalists focused on building
their own ministries and networks for the next quarter century. Older schools like MBI flourished, expand-
ing into a full Bible college, and Wheaton College was the fastest-growing college in America during the
1930s. New schools proliferated as well, most notably Dallas Seminary (1924), Bob Jones College (1927),
Westminster Seminary (1929), and Fuller Seminary (1947).

34 Ibid., 4. "Militant" in this case is defined as "aggressively active in a cause." By about 1960,
only the more extreme believers still called themselves fundamentalists.

35 James Guth et al., “Faith and the Environment: Religious Beliefs and Attitudes on Environmental
decades old, this excellent study's reference to conservative eschatology and environmental views does jibe
with the current data sources and literature used in this thesis.
ronment for conservative evangelicals. For a progressive evangelical, the same term denotes a caretaking relationship with the natural world. The divergence is stark and deeply rooted, often resulting in the use of the same scriptural passage to defend opposing stances on the same issue, whether it is an environmental justice issue such as concern for the world’s poor, or deciphering God’s true meaning for humankind.36

So where does that leave creation care? What, if anything, should evangelicals do about climate change and other environmental concerns? Those who are willing to address environmental issues from a progressive, postmillennial standpoint of taking action, either at the organizational and policy levels or through individual endeavors, continue to be at loggerheads with more traditional, premillennial-thinking conservative evangelicals who have various beliefs regarding the planet’s ability to survive (or not survive) human habitation. Adding to the conflict is the fact that premillennial belief may encompass various apocalyptic outlooks, all having to do with the “end times” prophecies of Christ. For these believers, there is no reason to worry about impending environmental doom, as Christ will return and save all believers regardless of what happens to the planet (one “extreme” interpretation, according to Richard Cizik of the New Evangelical Partnership, is that the Earth must be destroyed before the Rapture can occur).37 Dominionists, or re-constructionists, pose a challenge to the creation care ethic as they adhere to a Calvinist

36 The verses most often quoted, and variously interpreted, are Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15, and the Book of Revelation, although many other passages have been quoted by both progressives and conservatives to support contrasting arguments regarding what stewardship means in a biblical sense. A list of verses employed by those engaged in the creation care debate may be found in the Appendix.

system which, among other things, includes a belief that, “Christian politics has as its primary intent the conquest of land – of men, families, institutions, bureaucracies, courts and governments for the Kingdom of Christ.” Exceptionalism is another belief held by some conservatives, as in a human context it can refer to the belief that human beings have special status in nature based upon their unique capabilities, and that this special status conveys special rights, such as dominion over the planet. Undoubtedly the most famous premillennial dispensationalist in the public policy arena was former Secretary of the Interior James Watt. A member of a Pentecostal denomination (the Assemblies of God), Watt expressed his beliefs when he warned Congress not to gaze too far ahead on natural-resource policy planning because, “I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns; whatever it is we have to manage with a skill to have the resources needed for future generations.”

The words “dominion” and “subdue” in Genesis 1:28, in particular, have often been used to justify exploitation of natural resources on the conservative side (i.e., God will always provide more as needed, because natural resources were put into the Earth for

---


40 Congressional testimony of James Watt, quoted in David Neff, “Second Coming Ecology,” *Christianity Today* (July 2008): 35. The quote is often taken out of context, and while it clearly shows a dispensationalist outlook, it also illustrates a degree of ecological sensitivity based on biblical stewardship values. The only time Watt gave public testimony about the relationship between his Christian beliefs and care for the environment was in February 1981, in response to Oregon Democrat Jim Weaver, before a House subcommittee on the environment.
human use), and have also been used to blame Christianity in general for environmental problems by the progressive and secular sides.\footnote{Genesis 1:28 reads, God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (New Revised Standard Version).} Probably the most famous quote regarding Christianity as an environmental foe is from historian Lynn White Jr., who described western Christianity as “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” and Christians and their theology as “bearing a great burden” of responsibility for the ecological crisis.\footnote{Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” Science 155, no. 3767 (March 1967): 1203-1207.} The science community in general praised his thesis, and the Ecological Society of America responded by awarding him their prestigious Mercer prize. Progressive evangelicals, while not agreeing entirely with White’s allegation, are nevertheless working hard to redefine traditional dominion theology within their ranks in a way that embraces care and tending of God’s creation. An examination of the development of these progressive evangelicals follows.

The Left: Progressive Evangelicals and the Evolution of Creation Care

By World War II, a slightly more open sensibility began to take shape, as the more moderate faction of fundamentalists began calling themselves "evangelicals" to stress their less militant, and more culturally collaborative, position. A key event in solidifying the unity of these reclaimed evangelicals was the formation of the NAE in 1942, although real "collaboration" with outsiders would take some time as the NAE navigated between
conservative and moderate factions. Part of the navigation was due to the influx of non-Protestant immigrants into the United States during and after the war. While the war itself and the post-war economic boom made the assimilation of non-Protestant immigrants into America possible, the resulting welfare state and growing capitalism began to undermine the Protestant ethic, which was still the doctrinal and moral core of the nation.

This disestablishment further secularized public morality and brought about a pluralistic system of mores within the country which, in part, helped fuel the cultural shift of the 1960s. During the late sixties and early seventies, evangelical attention to environmental concerns began to blossom as a response to White’s article, which drew upon Genesis 1:28 and the doctrine of dominion which calls for humankind to “fill the earth and subdue it.” The article and the attention it drew prompted evangelicals to come to Christianity’s defense, primarily by reinterpreting Genesis as a call to responsible earthkeeping by focusing on Genesis 2:15, which suggests stewardship, not dominion, as a more accurate representation of biblical guidance: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” Within a larger context, evangelicals as a whole were

---

43 U.S.history.com, accessed May 9, 2016, [http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h3806.html](http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h3806.html). The NAE developed out of the National Conference for United Action Among Evangelicals held in St. Louis, MO. While the tone of the conference was stridently anti-liberal, it still delineated the differences between the more militant fundamentalist faction and those who preferred to be called evangelical.


45 Ibid.

46 Bible, Genesis 1:28, New Standard Revised Version: “God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’”

becoming more theologically diverse by the sixties. The progressive faction, although a minority, became increasingly influenced by the prevailing counterculture and began to move to the left theologically and politically. Many younger evangelicals joined their non-evangelical and secular friends in protesting Vietnam, marching in the Civil Rights Movement, questioning traditional gender roles, and speaking out in support of environmental stewardship. Although not stated outright, the left of the movement had started to gravitate towards a definitive postmillennial outlook that had at its core social and environmental justice issues that were focused on the present world, while the right maintained a traditionally conservative premillennial stance focused on a literal interpretation of the Bible and salvation as a supernatural event of the future. Partly as an ongoing rebuttal of White’s article, and partly as a sign of the times, evangelical scholars developed a significant body of ecotheology during the 1970s-80s that laid the foundation for subsequent engagement beyond the ivory tower. In 1973, theologian Jack Rogers published an article in which he surveyed the published studies of approximately twelve theologians which had appeared since White's article. They reflect the search for "an appropriate theological model" which adequately assesses the biblical data regarding the relationship between God, humans, and nature.


used widely in any evangelical circle today (most probably due to a perception of nature worship), creation care leaders did successfully transform its principles into activism.

With regard to environmental stewardship specifically, progressive evangelicals adhered to five centralities: 1) affirmation of evangelical commitment to the idea that creation of the physical Earth is the consequence of an act of willful agency on the part of a living God, as described in the Bible; 2) the creation story as expressed in the book of Genesis which calls on all Christians to act as responsible stewards over the Earth; 3) belief that the Bible in its entirety is infused with calls for believers to live in harmony with nature and provides a coherent environmental ethic; 4) belief in the infallibility of the Bible, emphasizing literal or near literal interpretation of the text, and stressing that the book stands above all others as a guide to Christian moral action (also valued, however, are other sources of information, including scientific research, as a guide to understanding how stewardship can be practiced in the real world); and 5) increasing engagement in cooperation with non-evangelical Christian groups involved with creation care, with some leaders calling for closer ties with secular groups, including scientific organizations.\textsuperscript{51} As the sixties and seventies drew to a close, this ethic served to guide evangelicalism’s “liberalized” wing, spawning several organizations called to action on behalf of pro-environmental principles. These organizations were in the vanguard of creation care as a movement in the United States.

In the forefront was the Au Sable Institute, founded in the late 1970s, with a mission to integrate “knowledge of the creation with biblical principles for the purpose of bringing the Christian community and the general public to a better understanding of the Creator and the stewardship of God's creation.”\textsuperscript{52} Initially begun as a Christian summer boys camp founded by evangelical biologist DeWitt, Au Sable grew into an institute that offers environmental science programs at more than fifty Christian colleges in the United States and abroad through advanced, field-based courses in all aspects of environmental study.\textsuperscript{53} The organization is recognized by many creation care leaders as being a harbinger of the growing environmental movement within evangelicalism, and a pipeline for future leaders. DeWitt was also a co-founder of the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) more than twenty years later in 1993, which eventually linked with an organization called the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), an association of independent faith groups in the United States including (in addition to EEN), the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Christ and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life.\textsuperscript{54}

EEN was developed as a response to evangelicals’ growing recognition of social justice issues related to the environment. The organization’s work is grounded in the


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54} National Religious Partnership for the Environment website, accessed April 12, 2016, http://www.nrpe.org/. Each partner maintains a common biblical faith but draws upon its own individual traditions to undertake scholarship, leadership training, congregational and agency initiative, and public policy education related to environmental sustainability and justice.
Bible’s teaching on the responsibility of God’s people to “tend the garden” and in a desire to be faithful to, and follow, Jesus Christ. It describes itself as a ministry that educates, inspires, and mobilizes Christians in their effort to care for God’s creation, to be faithful stewards of God’s provision, to get involved in regions of the United States and the world impacted by pollution, and to advocate for actions and policies that honor God and protect the environment. Perceiving a need for an organized, continuous and collaborative effort to educate evangelicals about the biblical mandate to care for God’s creation, Ron Sider of Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) established the group with co-founder DeWitt in order to provide a basis of connection and support for individuals and organizations committed to biblically-based environmentalism. EEN has now grown to include twenty-four partner organizations, and is the most politically active and secularly affiliated of all the key progressive evangelical organizations, as will be discussed in later chapters.

It was in 1997, however, when something occurred that was critical for uniting evangelical leaders and secular partners in pursuit of common environmental causes: the

---

55 The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale website, accessed May 26, 2016, http://fore.yale.edu/religion/christianity/projects/evangelical_envt/. EEN publishes materials to equip and inspire individuals, families, and churches; seeks to educate and mobilize Christians to make a difference in their churches and communities; and to speak out on national and international policies that affect the ability to preach the Gospel, protect life, and care for God’s creation.


John Ray Initiative (JRI).\textsuperscript{58} JRI was developed as an educational charity to promote responsible environmental stewardship in accordance with Christian principles and the wise use of science and technology, while at the same time stimulating action in pursuit of environmental protection and sustainable development – including action by international decision-makers and leaders.\textsuperscript{59} JRI’s chairman during this time was Sir John T. Houghton, who was also co-chair of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) established in 1988, and the lead editor for the IPCC’s first three reports. Eventually, Houghton began working with DeWitt, and together they formed Forum 2002 at St. Anne’s College in Oxford, co-sponsored by Au Sable and JRI. The Forum brought together more than seventy top policymakers and religious leaders to hear directly from scientists about climate change, and to provide a forum for discussion of how churches, individuals, and institutions in the wider society should respond to the growing environmental crisis.

In perhaps one of the most stark examples of a truly postmillennialist transformation, it was at the Forum that Cizik, at that time the NAE’s Vice President for Governmental Affairs, experienced his conversion into a supporter of environmental stewardship, a conversion that he said was “not unlike my conversion to Christ… I realized all at once, with sudden awe, that climate change is a phenomenon of truly biblical

\textsuperscript{58} Although located in the United Kingdom, JRI was critical in developing a creation care ethic among evangelical elites in the U.S.

proportions.” Cizik’s epiphany translated into an aggressive campaign to make environmental stewardship one of the top priorities for all evangelicals. At a 2005 anti-abortion rally in Washington, D.C., Cizik unfurled a banner proclaiming “Stop Mercury Poisoning of the Unborn.” While many if not most people at the rally had no idea what he was talking about, to Cizik the connection was simple: the major route of mercury poisoning is through consumption of fish, which has major implications for pregnant mothers, including possible brain damage in unborn children. For Cizik, care for the environment had turned into a basic right to life issue, something that has been a hard sell within the evangelical camp, but that is currently experiencing more acceptance, especially among younger evangelicals and those who are attracted to Cizik’s new organization, the New Evangelical Partnership.

The end result of Forum 2002, a document entitled “Oxford Declaration on Climate Change,” was seminal for much of the other environmental work that followed. The declaration’s conclusion is particularly relevant in terms of summing up the moral and ethical imperatives behind creation care: 1) human-induced climate change is a moral, ethical, and religious issue; 2) the earth’s climate is changing, with adverse effects on people, communities, and ecosystems; 3) action is needed now, both to arrest climate change and to adapt to its effects; and 4) Christian denominations, churches, and organizations need to take action to do the following: increase awareness of the facts of global

---

climate change and its moral implications; set an example through individual and collective actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions; increase demand for technologies and products that produce less emission of carbon dioxide; and urge immediate and responsible action by national governments under the Framework Convention on Climate Change.\(^\text{61}\)

John Green, an expert on religion and politics at the University of Akron, expects the "branching out" work that Cizik helped spearhead for the evangelical movement to continue, regardless of whether Cizik decides to ever leave the public arena: "There are a lot of forces working at broadening the evangelical agenda, particularly evangelicals under thirty…In the long term, there will be people who become more prominent from this younger evangelical generation."\(^\text{62}\) Riding on the tide of a strengthening creation care movement stemming from the Oxford forum, EEN, *Christianity Today* magazine and the NAE co-sponsored a conference in Sandy Cove, Maryland in 2004. It was at this meeting that consensus was reached on a (progressive) statement of creation care which became known as The Sandy Cove Covenant.\(^\text{63}\) Subsequent to this historic meeting, the NAE published an evangelical public policy agenda, “For the Health of the Nation” which states in part, “God’s concern extends…to justice for the poor and the oppressed, from

---


the sanctity of human life to care for creation…The Scriptures make it clear that a biblical agenda is broad and urgent.64

By 2006, the environmental ethic had taken firm hold for progressives, and a core constituency of Sandy Cove elites collaborated to develop the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI), which released a statement called “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action.”65 The Call, which made headlines worldwide in most major markets, urged fundamental changes in values, lifestyles, and public policies to address the worsening problems of climate change before it is too late. The missive, and many of the resulting actions subsequent to its publication, were aimed at fixing the brokenness that has severed humans from God’s creation and, to a certain extent, from each other. The Call’s argument for engagement includes four parts: 1) human-induced climate change is real; 2) the consequences of climate change will be significant and will hit the poor the hardest; 3) Christian and moral convictions demand our response; and 4) the need for governments, businesses, churches and individuals to act now is urgent.66 The political implications of the Call will be examined later in this thesis. The ECI, while serving as the blueprint for creation care activists and believers, also served as the final straw for the conservative

---


65 Democracy - A Journal of Ideas, “God and Climate” (Spring, 2006, no. 40), accessed August 15, 2016, http://democracyjournal.org/magazine/40/god-and-climate/. EEN, especially, was instrumental in launching the ECI and convening evangelical allies to draft the Call. Core leaders of the ECI began collecting signatures for this statement by sending out letters and holding meetings with senior evangelical leaders. Signatories included the board members of the NAE (but in the end, not Cizik), presidents of universities in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, and executives of groups affiliated with the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations.

wing which responded with severe criticism and a public relations push of their own, discussed later in this chapter.

Oddly enough, another critical component of the evangelical drive towards creation care can be found on the secular side, in world renowned biodiversity scientist, Dr. Edward O. Wilson. Wilson has long been a secular humanist, but he was raised a Southern Baptist in his native Alabama, and he understood the power of religion. He wrote his 2006 book, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, to specifically resonate with the millions of Americans who worship under the evangelical umbrella, including its leadership. The book is essentially an invitation to a fictitious Baptist minister to engage in an environmental dialogue. “I am sure it was a lot easier for me than most other scientists to offer the hand of friendship, and ask for help the way I did…” Wilson has said, “Having grown up in the evangelical culture of the South…I could not help but think about those around me, almost all genuinely devoted to Christian redemption…They were far from the rigid Bible thumpers so often depicted.” Wilson said he believed the evangelical community to be so sizable and influential that without its support bridging the gap between science and religion to save life on Earth would be impossible.

---

67 Edward O. Wilson, Professor Emeritus and Honorary Curator in Entomology at Harvard University, is the author of two Pulitzer Prize winning books, and is widely considered the “father of biodiversity.”


Wilson and Cizik officially began their creation care conversation in the summer of 2006 during a lunch at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C., subsequent to publication of *The Creation*. The lunch spawned an idea for a series of e-correspondences entitled “Can Religion and Environmentalism Find Common Ground in the 21st Century?” that was eventually published online in Audubonmagazine.org in September of 2006, wherein Cizik accepted the invitation as issued in Wilson’s book. At that time, Cizik still represented the NAE, which at that time included thirty million members at forty-five thousand churches in the United States. By engaging with Wilson, Cizik sought to expand the creation care ethic within evangelical ranks by encouraging them and others to revisit Scripture and consider that “dominion” does not mean “domination” (Scripture speaks of the good kings of Israel as having a kindly dominion), “subdue” does not mean “destroy,” and that perhaps focusing on the message of Genesis rather than a literal interpretation could result in a new understanding of what God is calling humankind to do. Cizik had his own revelation when he “realized I was violating the biblical commands to serve and to protect creation (Genesis 2:15). The Hebrew words “to serve” (avad) and “protect” (shamar) mean we must be care-takers, not just takers. I had to turn around and go in another direction.” Wallis frames the progressives’ dialogue in classic postmillennial terms: creation care is not only an ethical issue, but one of social justice. It is and must remain part of the nation's next Great Awakening.

---


The Right: Conservative Evangelicals and the Problem of Creation Care

As one would expect, conservative evangelicals’ interpretation of the Bible and their perception of secular influences are considerably different than their progressive counterparts. Part of the dissonance stems from the fact that conservatives traditionally do not trust ecumenicalism or groups that do not share the same belief system, especially those who mix and match religious traditions or who lean towards pantheism, nature worship or speciesism, as some in the environmental movement are perceived as doing. Conservatives are also highly skeptical of secular science and secular groups in general, tending to disbelieve or distrust the “mainstream,” while favoring the science and other ideas supported and disseminated by conservative evangelical organizations.

As was the case in Moody’s day, today’s conservative evangelicals place an emphasis on individual salvation and personal evangelism. Environmentalism, consequently, is a distraction from that primary mission, and has become viewed as left wing propaganda. The late Rev. Falwell believed that progressive evangelical environmentalists, by partnering with traditionally liberal groups, were by association providing a degree of credibility to organizations that were viewed as hostile to Christian belief: "I agree every Christian ought to be an environmentalist of reasonable sort…But we shouldn't be hugging trees and worshipping the creation more than we worship the Creator, and that is what global warming is all about."72 Moreover, in a sermon delivered shortly before his death, Falwell condemned the entire notion of climate change stating, “The endless hyste-

---

ria and alarmism over alleged global warming has increasingly become a national and international nuisance and loses credibility with every passing day. The entire myth has little to do with science and much to do with politics.” Falwell’s impact in the political arena, as well as the politics of creation care, will be discussed in depth later in this thesis.

By the time Falwell made his initial foray onto the environmental battlefield, conservative evangelical organizations had already sown fertile ground. Chief among those organizations was and is the Cornwall Alliance, which describes itself as stewardship-oriented but with a dominion-based philosophy underlying its theology. The Alliance was founded as a reaction to the efforts of progressive evangelical leaders supporting creation care, while at the same time promoting a free-market approach to care for the environment. E. Calvin Beisner, former associate professor of historical theology and social ethics at Knox Theological Seminary and national spokesman for the Alliance, reiterates the organization’s stance that: mainstream science is inaccurate in its interpretation of the harm global warming trends are doing to the earth (e.g., he views global warming as a positive thing because he believes it encourages more plant and crop growth); the poor would be disproportionately and unfairly affected by attempts to decrease energy consumption and global emissions; and “dominion” over the earth definitely takes priority over stewardship and conservation because that is how Scripture was intended to be in-


74 The Cornwall Alliance, accessed March 3, 2016, http://cornwallalliance.org/. The organization describes itself as: “A coalition of theologians, pastors, ministry leaders, scientists, economists, policy experts, and committed laymen, the Cornwall Alliance is an evangelical voice promoting environmental stewardship and economic development built on Biblical principles.”
terpreted. In 1999, Beisner was introduced to policy advocacy by Robert Sirico, founder of the Acton Institute, a conservative think tank dedicated to the intersection of faith and free-market principles, and now publisher of many Alliance environmental studies. In 2000, as a response to the considerable mainstream publicity received by a growing environmental movement, the Alliance’s conservative leaders and scholars produced “The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship,” for which Acton gathered fifteen hundred signatories. Supporters included James Dobson, Chuck Colson and D. James Kennedy, who, along with conservatives of other faiths joined together to counter the “misconceptions about nature and science, coupled with erroneous theological and anthropological positions” regarding the environment. The Declaration expresses concern with the way environmentalism “views humans as principally consumers and polluters rather than producers and stewards. Consequently they ignore our potential, as bearers of God’s image, to add to the earth’s abundance.” Beisner himself has said repeatedly that humans have a biblical mandate to “be fruitful and multiply,” and that this should be enough to make us understand that “human multiplication should seen not as a curse, but


77 Ibid.

78 Cornwall Alliance, “The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship,” accessed May 1, 2016, http://cornwallalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/the-cornwall-declaration-on-environmental-stewardship.pdf. Dobson is the founder of the conservative organization Focus on the Family, and who is now affiliated with Family Talk, a Christian radio program. Colson was an evangelical Christian leader who founded Prison Fellowship and BreakPoint, subsequent to his service under President Nixon, including conviction as one of the Watergate Seven. Kennedy was an American pastor, evangelist, and Christian broadcaster.

79 Ibid.
as a blessing…unfortunately, many people in the anti-population growth movement see human multiplication as a curse. I don't think that that's a biblical understanding. 80

The organization's board of advisors includes both secular and religious members who adhere to a traditionally conservative view of climate change, and who support environmental science that is frequently out of the mainstream, indicating that global warming is either not happening, not caused by humans, or is happening but is nothing to worry about because of the earth's resilience. 81 Conservative evangelical leaders who are climate skeptics, such as Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family and Family Talk, regularly cite the Alliance's findings, which many times find their way into broader appeals for a more conservative political agenda. Dobson even penned a fictional letter that cites the "agendas" of environmentalists and global warming activists as part of the overall decline in American civilization. 82 However, the most outspoken critic of global warming fears is Beisner himself, who resolutely does not believe that climate change is an issue evangelicals are morally obligated to address, and who fears that it may become a wedge irreparably dividing what has been a fairly cohesive political force over the past quarter century. 83 Further, Beisner has taken the NAE to task for its support of creation care be-

---


cause he perceives the organization as trying to push its views on all evangelicals. He as-
serts his concern is not only hermeneutic, but scientific: “If I agreed that the science says
that human activity is driving what will be catastrophic global warming, then I would
agree that we had a moral obligation to change that human activity in the attempt to pre-
vent that. But I don't agree that the science tells us that.”

The Alliance has honed its ability to effectively communicate the anti-climate change message to a large swath of the evangelical community, helped in large part by the media, which, in the interest of showing both sides of the climate argument, can give as much air time to non-peer re-
viewed research as to mainstream scientists.

Beisner and the Alliance’s followers illustrate conservative evangelical skepticism about the infiltration of secular culture into the Judeo-Christian mindset in general, espe-
cially rejecting the idea of the deification of nature (under which ecotheology falls), or opposition to human dominion over creation, which Alliance members view as “romanti-
cism.” More specifically, they view environmentalism as a false social justice issue predicated upon the (secular science) lie of anthropogenic climate change. Conserva-
tives’ suspicion of outside influence, especially with regard to climate science, cannot be understated. Progressive evangelical scholar David Gushee illustrated as much when de-
scribing a debate he had with Beisner over creation care, wherein Beisner said to him,

“the very same people who gave us evolution are giving us climate change. Why should

84 Beisner, interview with Bill Moyers.
2014/04/the-cornwall-declaration-on-environmental-stewardship.pdf.
86 E. Calvin Beisner et al., A Call to Truth, Prudence and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming (Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation, 2006), 12.
we believe them now when they were wrong then?” Beisner says that the Alliance “has fellows, adjuncts, contributing writers, and advisors of all different millennial perspectives, so as an organization it takes no millennial position.” However, the Alliance’s publications, media communications, and public addresses reflect a traditionally conservative, dominion-based philosophy, regardless of the absence of a statement on eschatological belief.

By 2006, when progressive evangelicals were making headlines with the ECI’s Call to Action, the Alliance had established a group called the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance, which was later changed to the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation (CASC). From 2006 to the present day, CASC released various statements, studies, documentaries and other materials focused on debunking what it claims are faulty theological arguments, bad exegesis and inaccurate science put forth by progressive evangelical leaders with regard to climate change. Of particular significance is the emphasis on what will happen to the poor in a world of climate change. A key point of the Cornwall Declaration is concern that environmentalism will inhibit economic development and endanger the free market economy. This, the authors assert, will be the very thing that pre-

---


73
vents the less fortunate of the world to rise up out of poverty because, “Growing affluence, technological innovation, and the application of human and material capital are integral to environmental improvement...to oppose economic progress in the name of environmental stewardship is often sadly self-defeating.” Generally, the conservative stance on creation care is that natural resources exist for use by humankind, and that this is what God intended. This ethic was summed up succinctly in a recent American Family Radio interview with Beisner wherein he stated that believing in climate change "is an insult to God," because fossil fuels were put in the earth as a gift to mankind.

The Center (and Silent Majority?): Evolving Evangelical Opinion on Creation Care

There are indications that a pro-environment shift is taking place within traditionally conservative groups, even though the shift means embracing the science behind climate change. Gushee is on record repeatedly saying that the left and right of evangelicalism is competing for the center, and that creation care is a large part of the reason why. However, historian Mark Stoll believes there may be something else going on as well, including the fact that opposition between stewardship and dominion is “easily overdrawn...They are perfectly compatible theological concepts, i.e., that the earth is the

---

91 Ibid. Further, the Declaration states that growing affluence and technological innovation “has enabled people in societies blessed with an advanced economy not only to reduce pollution, while producing more of the goods and services responsible for the great improvements in the human condition, but also to alleviate the negative effects of much past pollution.”


93 Gushee, telephone interview by author, November 20, 2012.
Lord's but that humans have been put in charge to manage it...I find that the social versus individualistic orientation of a church is a better predictor than theology whether it will be sympathetic towards environmentalist ideas and activism.  

While many self-proclaimed evangelicals are on the fence about how or whether creation care fits into a larger theological context, there is one significant group that has moved from the right towards the center. In 2007, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest coalition of evangelical churches in the United States, issued a resolution stating that global warming science was speculative at best, making the organization’s official position one of opposition to global warming legislation. In spite of this, a small contingent of SBC creation care activists scored a notable victory by issuing a response to the official position entitled "A Southern Baptist Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change," which stated in part, “We believe our current denominational engagement with these (creation care) issues have often been too timid, failing to produce a unified moral voice. Our cautious response to these issues in the face of mounting evidence may be seen by the world as uncaring, reckless and ill-informed. We can do better.” Critics responded by demanding that then president Frank Page, who signed the declaration along with other well known individuals within the SBC (including incoming

---


president Johnny Hunt), publicly declare that it did not represent official SBC policy but only expressed the opinions of a few individual SBC members.97 The same year, Russell Moore, then dean of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, testified in front of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on religious perspectives on climate change, along with three other evangelicals.98 Echoing Beisner, his testimony focused on the concern the SBC had with the popular demand to respond to climate change, including issues having to do with policy implementation, disenfranchisement of the poor, and a perceived expectation (by faith and secular communities, he claimed) of “utopianism” regarding environmental actions and policies.99

By 2008, however, the tide had shifted, and there is evidence that the SBC is continuing its trajectory to the center. Part of the reason is the younger generation of evangelicals who are inherently more open to creation care, which will be discussed in more depth later in this thesis. Another part of the reason, according to Gushee, is “ethics professors at the Southern Baptist Seminary who are pulling the organization in a center right direction. The larger contextual reason may be that the SBC itself is still so big, encompassing large parts of the South, that an overly rigid fundamentalism doesn't capture


98 John Copeland Nagle, “The Evangelical Debate Over Climate Change,” *University of St. Thomas Law Journal* 5, 1 (Winter 2008): 64. The three others were Jim Ball/EEN, who explained the ECI and its public policy recommendations; David Barton, activist and historian, who identified the distinctive evangelical approaches to theology, science and prioritizing social issues; and James Tonkowich, Institute on Religion and Democracy, who emphasized the positive value of human population and development.

their whole constituency.” Moore, who as of this writing is the current president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), the public policy arm of the SBC, appears to illustrate Gushee’s assessment. On Earth Day in 2015, Moore posted an article on his website entitled, “Should Christians Care about Earth Day?” The answer he gives is “yes,” within a stewardship-based interpretation of dominionism:

This care and preservation for the creation is not, as some believe, incompatible with the biblical doctrine of dominion….Christian dominion is not, in Carl Henry’s words, “pharaoh-like,” but instead is Christlike….Christ’s example of pouring Himself out for others is a graphic illustration of how true biblical dominion is done for the sake of others….Thus, while human beings have dominion over the creation, we have no dominion over one another, or indeed over our createdness itself. What is often called environmental protection is simply the outworking of neighbor-love….The contemporary environmentalist movement has often been flawed and clumsy and sometimes evil, as any movement made up of fallen sinners tends to be. But, at the core of it, is a concept Christians ought to recognize. It is that of creatureliness, and dependence, and longing for the permanent things. And in the face of an earth often ravaged by human sin and rapaciousness, Christian creation-care can be a call to the kind of ultimate accountability that only makes sense in a Christian story of the universe.  

For those evangelicals who have embraced creation care from an activist standpoint, there is still a degree of moral suasion necessary to bridge the gap with the secular world in order to provide an inducement for trust (the vice versa is true as well). This is tricky territory for those in the middle. Even televangelist Pat Robertson changed his conservative stance on global warming, then changed it back again. In October 2005, Robertson accused the ECI of teaming up with "far-left environmentalists," but in the summer of 2006 on his 700 Club television show, Robertson stated that, “they're making

100 Gushee, interview by author, March 15, 2016.

a convert out of me” with regard to the realities of global warming. He also said, "We really need to address the burning of fossil fuels. If we are contributing to the destruction of this planet, we need to do something about it.” However, in 2012, most probably for political reasons coinciding with the rise of the Tea Party and health care reform, he reversed himself again, denying the reality of climate change.

Creation care centrists, especially, are uniform in their attempt to share an environmental narrative that is at once consistent with a belief in creation as well as science, to build a story of a common history over time and shared vision for the future. According to Gushee, this reflects the more traditional and broader narrative of the Christian right since the seventies. For example, evangelical theistic evolution is “different” but not mainstream because evolution is still pitched as a universe without God. But more humble presentations of evolution create more openings for conversation that can transcend traditional theological and political barriers.

One thing is apparent, however. The dialogue opened up by White’s 1967 article has resulted in what appears to be a growing silent majority within evangelicalism’s cen-

103 Ibid.
104 Lydia Bean and Steven Teles, “God and Climate,” Democracy, a Journal of Ideas 40 (Spring 2016), accessed May 29, 2016, http://democracyjournal.org/magazine/40/god-and-climate/. Robertson’s reversal coincided with the Republican takeover of the House of Representatives, following the rise of the Tea Party. Any action on climate change was swept up in the concerted effort to stop health care reform by the Republican party.
ter that embraces some type of an environmental ethic. The degree and focus on creation care may vary within this majority, but from the perspective of evangelical activism, the necessity of protecting God’s creation appears to be becoming more significant for believers, not less. Most notably, evangelical environmental activism has begun to make a decisive difference in American politics. These developments have implications concerning how and where religious beliefs intertwining with politics have affected, and can further affect, human values from the standpoint of a moral and ethical code with regard to creation. The evolution of political action with regard to creation care will be explored next.
CHAPTER THREE

EVANGELICALS AND THE EVOLUTION OF (POLITICAL) ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

Long before White’s infamous article in *Science* calling out Christianity for its role in the world’s ecological crisis, evangelicals had already begun their foray into politics. Religious advocacy has always been part of America to some degree, including evangelical involvement in the social gospel movement, abolition, temperance, suffrage and the evolution debate, as discussed in previous chapters. Although environmentalism is a manifestation of the late twentieth century, creation care advocates to a large degree modeled their political activities on two trailblazing individuals who had their roots in the more traditional Protestantism of young America: Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell.

Billy Graham

Prior to the well known rise of Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority, neo-evangelist William Franklin “Billy” Graham, Jr., brought religion to the art of American statecraft, and vice versa. Graham exerted a measurable degree of influence on the development and transformation of socio-religious motifs leading into the 1960s. Paramount to his success was his ability to blur the lines between politics and religion by starkly marking the boundary between American patriotic religiosity (mostly Protestant), and “god-

---


2 Carl F.H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1947), 89. Henry defines the neo-evangelical movement as a response among orthodox evangelical Protestants to the separatism of fundamentalist Christianity beginning in the 1930s. The term was coined by Harold Ockenga in 1947 to identify a distinct movement within the broader evangelical Fundamentalist Christianity of that day. “Neo” evangelicals urged Fundamentalists to engage with culture directly and constructively, criticizing their separatism and rejection of the Social gospel as it had been developed by Protestant activists of the previous century.
less Communism.” If you were a Christian, according to Reverend Graham, you could not possibly be a Communist (or the other way around).

Graham’s success as a bipartisan populist evangelist and unofficial political advisor in the sixties had its roots more than a decade earlier in 1944, when Graham took over an evangelist radio program in Chicago, and then later traveled the United States and Europe as an evangelist for the Youth for Christ International organization. However, it was not until 1949 in Los Angeles, when Graham scheduled a series of circus tent revival meetings, that he became known as a national religious figure. Graham’s authentic brand of neo-evangelism, which harkened back to the Great Awakenings, proved popular to an America that was not only increasingly consumer oriented, but was searching to regain its soul during the post-World War II/Cold War era. Americans were experiencing growing economic prosperity, but were consumed by anti-Communist fear and loathing. Rejecting the fire-and-brimstone message of fundamentalism, as well as its separatist tendencies, Graham gave voice to the fears that Americans were experiencing, while advocating broader engagement with culture, politics and intellectual pursuits, although he never embraced the theological and political liberalism of mainstream Protestantism. He opposed segregation, and reportedly tore down the ropes that organizers had erected to separate the audience into racial sections at one of his revivals, telling the ushers to leave the barriers down "or you can go on and have the revival without me.”

---


4 Ibid., 56.

evangelicalism did not resonate with fundamentalists, as they viewed the preacher as a compromiser of the faith. By the late 1950s, the antipathy had hardened into a schism, with hard line fundamentalists refusing to associate with Graham or even anyone who associated with an "evangelical."

Graham was bullish on America and salvation, and he did not subscribe to the gloom and doom philosophy of proselytizing that so many of his predecessors and contemporaries practiced. With the help of media mogul William Randolph Hearst, who instructed his newspaper editors to “puff Graham” (perhaps because he was so ardently anti-Communist, which sold so many newspapers), the evangelist became a household name as printed media and radio carried his revival meetings to a national audience. When he began to appear on television in the late 1950s, millions more in the public were reached through each broadcast, and his brand of pro-Christian/anti-Communist patriotism was widely embraced. Subsequent to the televised Los Angeles revivals, a Gallup poll revealed that eighty-five percent of Americans could correctly identify Billy Graham and that three-quarters of that number regarded him positively, a lesson in outreach that Jerry Falwell and other evangelicals subsequently took to heart and put into practice. Graham’s name recognition would only grow in future years, due largely to increased exposure through his televised programs and the number of Americans who were enthralled

---

6 Various sources and scholars describe Graham as pre- and postmillennial. Whatever he was considered to be, his actions were indicative of a postmillennial stance in terms of his engagement with the temporal world.


by the medium: by 1960, eighty-eight percent of households had a television set, and by
the mid-1960s television was considered to be the most important source of news and in-
formation for Americans, with an average of nearly six viewing hours per day per house-
hold.9

Graham’s activities in the political realm really took off during the Dwight D.
Eisenhower administration in the 1950s, when he struck up a friendship with the Presi-
dent, who, unlike former President Harry S. Truman, was much more open to a relation-
ship with the evangelical leader. Apart from serving as Eisenhower’s personal advisor and
confidant, Graham was appointed to the board of one of the most politically ambitious
efforts the President undertook, the Foundation for Religious Action in the Social and
Civil Order (FRASCO). The organization’s mission, which was financially supported in
part by the Rockefeller family, was “to pin-point the religious issue in the crisis of our
time…to unite all believers in God in the struggle between the free world and atheistic
Communism…to overthrow the big lie by the bigger Truth.”10 The Operations Control
Board, which coordinated American covert intelligence and propaganda activities, con-
sidered sending representatives to Vietnam through FRASCO, a proposal that gained the
attention of Vice President Nixon (who also became a friend of Graham’s), who sent it
forward to the Central Intelligence Agency.11 In addition to his duties with FRASCO,
Graham became the President’s primary international ambassador for spreading Ameri-

---

9 David Farber and Beth Bailey, *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s* (New York: Co-
lumbia University Press, 2001), 396-397. The exact number of viewing hours was 5.85 per day.

10 Inboden, 280.

11 Ibid., 281.
can religious values throughout the world, with surprisingly positive results. Graham’s activities illustrated how to use religion as a political tool, albeit without public and Congressional knowledge that the President and Graham personally conferred on strategy.

Congress itself did, however, find much to like in Graham. He had a knack for analyzing national and world events in a way that resonated with Protestant ideals, and spoke to a sense of national purpose based upon moral values and intelligent sacrifice.12 His erudition and opinion were so well respected on Capitol Hill that one of his (many) magazine columns, “The National Purpose,” was written into the Congressional Record in June 1960, at the request of a Democratic representative. The article was re-printed in the Record as “National Purpose: Graham Diagnosis — Moral and Spiritual Cancer Found in Stress on Personal Comfort.”13

Graham’s ability to establish positive relationships with politicians, especially presidents, was mutually advantageous and had an impact on American religiousity, including a strengthened interconnectedness between religion and American socio-political activities. Friendship with Graham ensured politicians’ credentials as Christians and men of integrity, while political recognition of the evangelist helped to confirm the belief (increasingly shared by Americans) that being religious was part of being a good American. Unlike subsequent evangelical leaders, Graham did not adhere to a Democrat or Republican party line, although he was a registered Democrat. He later refused to join Falwell’s

12 Ibid.

13 U.S. Congress. Senate. At the request of Wisconsin Democratic Senator William Proxmire, the article Purpose: Graham Diagnosis — Moral and Spiritual Cancer Found in Stress on Personal Comfort was included in the Congressional Record, Vol 106, Part 9, p. 11859, 86th Congress (June 6, 1960).
Moral Majority, explaining that evangelists needed to “stand in the middle” and “cannot be closely identified with any particular party or person” in order to be able to preach to all people.\textsuperscript{14} He founded the magazine \textit{Christianity Today} in 1956 based upon this philosophy, hewing to a conservative theological position with a liberal approach to social issues. Not surprisingly, Graham’s anti-Communist theology extended into the Vietnam era, wherein he supported the war, to the chagrin of many other religious leaders, and he made many trips into combat zones to speak to American troops. Defying the conventional wisdom of the time, he was able to bridge the eventual gap that developed between pro- and anti-war sentiments by reaching out to, and connecting with, counter cultural youth experimenting with sex and drugs (one of whom was his son), on their own terms, specifically through the Jesus Movement that began in the late 1960s.

Jerry Falwell

By 1976, two years before ESA was formally launched, the United States elected evangelical president Jimmy Carter into office, and “the year of the evangelical” was in full swing.\textsuperscript{15} By 1979, Rev. Falwell’s Moral Majority was becoming a household name. While the organization was ostensibly fundamentalist and not evangelical, it shifted the landscape forever with regard to the overt intersection of conservative Christian religion with American politics.

\textsuperscript{14} Baptist History and Heritage website, "Billy Graham: An Appreciation, June 22, 2016,” accessed August 5, 2016, \url{https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-87912863.html}. Graham’s full quote is: “I'm for morality, but morality goes beyond sex to human freedom and social justice. We as clergy know so very little to speak with authority on the Panama Canal or superiority of armaments. Evangelists cannot be closely identified with any particular party or person. We have to stand in the middle in order to preach to all people, right and left. I haven't been faithful to my own advice in the past. I will be in the future.”

\textsuperscript{15} Casanova, \textit{Public Religions}, 146.
The organization's glory days lasted for about ten years and was founded on four basic tenets: 1) pro-family, 2) pro-life, 3) pro-defense and 4) pro-Israel, and it proved the power of the Christian right as a political force.\(^{16}\) Made up primarily of conservative premillennialist Christian political action committees, the Moral Majority campaigned on issues that its members believed were important to maintaining a specific Christian conception of moral law, an understanding they believed represented the opinions of the “majority” of Americans.\(^{17}\) These issues included opposition to the perceived liberalization of America during the seventies and eighties, such as gay rights, abortion and feminism. A testament to the political strength of the organization can be found in the result of the 1980 Presidential election, wherein the Moral Majority was credited with giving Republican candidate Ronald Reagan two-thirds of the white evangelical vote over Democrat Jimmy Carter.\(^{18}\)

The organization superseded two other key organizations of the New Right, the Christian Voice and the Religious Roundtable, which willingly elevated Falwell to a leadership position mainly due to the perceived need for resource mobilization by the Christ-
ian right.19 Falwell’s ability to raise funds had caught the attention of the New Right in 1976 when he began the “I Love America” rallies in front of state capitols across the country; by the time the Moral Majority was formed in 1979, it had already become a powerful income-generating machine, raising one million dollars in one month (one-third of the projected first year budget).20 Within a half year, polls indicated that across the South and Southwest, nearly eighty percent of Americans had heard of the Moral Majority (forty percent nationwide), but most did not have a positive view of the organization.21 The rallies were an early indicator that Falwell had shifted from his earlier premillennialist position of the sixties in which he emphatically stated that religion and politics must remain separate: “We have few ties to this earth…I would find it impossible to stop preaching and do anything else…including fighting communism or participating in civil rights reforms.”22 The statement reiterated the traditional Baptist principle of separating religion and politics, and implicitly accused Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., of abandoning the principles of his faith by becoming politically active in civil rights. Falwell’s change of heart occurred, he said, when he perceived what he described as the decay of


20 Ibid., 147-148.

21 Ibid., 147.

22 In 1965 Falwell had stated, “We have few ties to this earth. We pay our taxes, cast our votes as a responsibility of citizenship, obey the laws of the land, and other things demanded of us by the society in which we live. But, at the same time, we are cognizant that our only purpose on this earth is to know Christ and to make Him known…Believing in the Bible as I do, I would find it impossible to stop preaching the pure saving gospel of Jesus Christ and begin doing anything else — including fighting communism or participating in civil rights reforms.” Quote integrated from: A. James Reichley, Faith in Politics, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002): 293, and Steve Bruce, The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America, 1978-1988, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988): 138.
the nation’s morality and its embrace of modernism.\textsuperscript{23} A closer look reveals another factor that was perhaps more galvanizing, which was the 1971 \textit{Green v. Connally} decision prohibiting segregation and threatening the tax exempt status of religiously-affiliated institutions such as Bob Jones University.\textsuperscript{24} The decision mobilized evangelical leaders to action, especially as the Internal Revenue Service began sending questionnaires to church-related “segregation academies,” including Falwell’s own Lynchburg Christian School, inquiring about their racial policies.\textsuperscript{25} Falwell was furious: “In some states,” he is widely quoted as saying, “It’s easier to open a massage parlor than a Christian school.”\textsuperscript{26}

Regardless of his reasons for doing so, by entering public life, Falwell was forced to admit that King was right after all, that he (Falwell) now saw that his earlier interpretation of the inerrant Bible was wrong, and that he had some ties to this earth after all, which meant that he had a moral imperative as a Christian to take action.\textsuperscript{27} This included

\begin{flushright}

\textsuperscript{24} There are many sources for this data, the one quoted here is from Balmer, \textit{Thy Kingdom Come} (15), wherein he recollects participating in a 1990 meeting sponsored by the Ethics and Public Policy Center. It was at the meeting that conservative activist Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation reminded attendees that what galvanized the Religious Right was not \textit{Roe v. Wade}, but the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) ruling that threatened to rescind Bob Jones University’s tax exempt status in 1971. Author’s note: public records show that the IRS notified university officials on November 30, 1970, of the pending challenge to its tax exemption, and in early 1971, the IRS issued Revenue Ruling 71-447 requiring all “charitable” institutions to adopt and publish a nondiscrimination policy in compliance with the common law concepts in sections 501(c)(3) and 170 of the Internal Revenue Code. The IRS officially revoked the university’s tax-exempt status on January 19, 1976, making its order effective retroactively to December 1, 1970, the day after the university officials were first informed that the institution’s tax-exemption was in jeopardy. For a comprehensive and comprehensible summary of the decision, see: \url{http://lawhigheredu.com/23-bob-jones-university-v-united-states.html}, accessed August 1, 2016.


\textsuperscript{26} Max Blumenthal, “Agent of Intolerance,” \textit{The Nation} (May 16, 2007), accessed August 7, 2016, \url{https://www.thenation.com/article/agent-intolerance/}.

\textsuperscript{27} Casanova, \textit{Public Religions}, 129.
\end{flushright}
evangelist-type outreach to Catholics, Jews, Mormons, mainline Protestants and even “non-religious” members, something that the Moral Majority’s leadership was not in complete agreement on. Though Falwell always publicly stated he was a premillennialist, his rhetoric had begun to reflect a definitive postmillennial outlook, becoming (generally) more mellow, less militant and comparatively more inclusive from the 1980s onward as he adapted his preaching to win a broader, less extremist — and more politically motivated — audience as his fame grew. Cultural anthropologist Susan Friend Harding in her ethnographic study of Falwell noted several manifestations of his postmillennial shift: he stopped condemning "worldly" lifestyle choices such as dancing, drinking wine, and attending movie theaters; softened his rhetoric of apocalypse and God's vengeful wrath; and shifted from biblical patriarchy to a complementarian view of gender roles. He further mainstreamed himself by aiming his strongest criticism at secular humanists, pagans and various liberals in place of the racist, anti-Semitic or anti-Catholic rhetoric common among Southern fundamentalist preachers but increasingly condemned as hate speech by the consensus of American society. Despite the hostility he sometimes provoked, Falwell was largely responsible for making American Christian conservatives politically ac-


30 Ibid.
tive as a cohesive group, and he had a marked impact on American religious and political life in the late twentieth century.  

Even with the aforementioned postmillennial adaptations to a modern world, neither Graham nor Falwell prioritized environmentalism as a Christian imperative, despite increasing public and government views that were supportive of environmentally protective policies and laws. Nor was either man officially supportive of the groundbreaking legislation that was a hallmark of the sixties, seventies and eighties, such as the Clean Air Act, Water Quality Act, Endangered Species Act, Air Quality Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Nuclear Waste Policy Act and numerous others. Regardless, the most important legacy of Graham, and particularly Falwell, is proof of the power of the Christian right (whether evangelical, fundamentalist or a hybrid of the two), to affect public opinion and public policy. This phenomenon would have increasing value to the American environmental movement as time went on.

Although largely unrecognized, the political seeds of the creation care movement were being sown during this era, as one of the most read books by those within the Jesus Movement included Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, written nearly two decades before his engagement with EEN, and cited by *Christianity Today* as one of the

---


one hundred most influential books in religion of the twentieth century. As leader of the nascent ESA in the early seventies, Sider and his team grew the organization into the first politically-oriented national membership-based evangelical organization in the country by 1978. Most of the organization’s activities are devoted to social justice issues, and it is significant for its overt foray into the politics of progressive racial and economic justice at a time when other evangelical voices were muted. ESA opposed the Reagan Administration’s funding of the contra-waged guerrilla war against the Sandinista government, but also opposed the Sandinistas’ restrictions on freedom. It developed regular reports through its newsletter informing readers about both the massacres by the contras and the violations of freedom by the Sandinistas. ESA worked for a bilateral, verifiable nuclear freeze in the early eighties, including an hour long televised debate between Sider and Falwell on CNN. ESA also launched a national campaign to gather evangelical support for economic sanctions against South Africa’s apartheid government, including sponsorship of months’ long tours of two dozen evangelical colleges by a leading black South African evangelical, Moss Ntlha. In the late nineties, after the failed launch of a pro-life


34 Ron Sider, “A Reflection,” accessed August 6, 2016, [http://www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org/about/history/](http://www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org/about/history/). Although Sider characterizes Evangelicals for Social Action as “largely educational and always focused more broadly on developing a biblically balanced evangelical social concern,” he also states that “from the beginning, ESA dealt with political issues.”


36 Ibid.

Political Action Committee, JustLife, ESA began to devote more attention to helping churches combine evangelism and social action, including intensive work on the environment leading to the NRPE, as previously discussed.

Beginning of the Creation Care Movement: Environmental Justice and Science

At the same time the Moral Majority was grabbing headlines, America’s environmental ethic was gaining ground in a number of areas, both secular and religious. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was well established and had passed dozens of environmentally-protective acts and amendments,\(^{38}\) Au Sable was pioneering stewardship curricula in Christian schools, the IPCC was drafting its first report, and EEN and JRI were in the process of forming, to name a few.\(^{39}\) Significantly, the NAE had already published a number of statements, beginning in 1970, focused on ecological awareness that urged its constituency to consider changing wasteful behaviors, “even at the cost of personal discomfort or inconvenience.”\(^{40}\) The organization had also expressed the view that “scientists are alarmed” about the state of the natural environment and so evangelicals should be as well, even to the point of supporting government intervention: “We com-


mend President Nixon and all government and private institutions and corporations who are involved with an announced determination to salvage our environment.”

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about what would become the creation care movement during this time was its openness to the science behind global warming and climate change. A large part of the progressive evangelical attraction to the science behind climate change had to do with the growing social justice movement in the United States during the eighties, which had come to include environmental justice. Environmental justice as a movement became headline-worthy in 1982 when residents from a small town in North Carolina, who were overwhelmingly poor, rural and black, protested the dumping of toxic polychlorinated biphenyl-laced soil (PCB) in a newly-constructed hazardous landfill in their community. Although not the first protest of its kind, this particular event marked the first instance of an environmental protest by people of color that

---

41 NAE Resolution, “Ecology” (1970), accessed August 11, 2016, http://nae.net/ecology/. See also the 1971 Resolution “Environment and Ecology,” wherein the NAE states: “We pledge our cooperation to any responsible effort to solve critical environmental problems, and our willingness to support all proven solutions developed by competent authorities. We call upon our constituency to do the same.”

42 Environmental Protection Agency website, accessed August 8, 2016, https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice. EPA defines environmental justice as: “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. EPA has this goal for all communities and persons across this nation. It will be achieved when everyone enjoys: the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.” Generally speaking, this definition aligns with creation care activism in social justice and environmental justice issues.

43 Natural Resources Defense Council, “Environmental Justice Movement,” accessed August 12, 2016, https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement. Protesting six thousand truckloads of PCB-laden soil into their community, residents laid down on roads leading into the landfill. Six weeks of marches and nonviolent street protests followed, and more than 500 people were arrested, the first arrests in the nation’s history over the siting of a landfill. The protests and legal challenges mounted by the people of Afton and Warren County, North Carolina, to fight the landfill are considered by many to be the first major milestone in the national movement for environmental justice.
garnered widespread national attention. The battle was ultimately lost by the community, but the story of a small town of ordinary people driven to desperate measures to protect their homes and children from deadly PCBs leeching into groundwater drew national media attention and mobilized people across the country who had lived through similar injustice.

By the start of the nineties, fertile ground had been sown by progressive evangelicals who had taken up the mantle of environmental justice as part of the creation care ethic, as illustrated by the NAE statement: “The Bible reveals God as the creator and owner of their universe….Sadly, some have badly misunderstood the purposes of God’s resources…The natural environment is given for the use and provision of all living things. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, progressive evangelicals were making themselves known through the Oxford Declaration on Climate Change, the Sandy Cove

Ibid. Other communities of color had organized to oppose environmental threats before Warren County. In the early 1960s, Latino farm workers organized by Cesar Chavez fought for workplace rights, including protection from harmful pesticides in the farm fields of California's San Joaquin valley. In 1967, African-American students took to the streets of Houston to oppose a city garbage dump in their community that had claimed the lives of two children. In 1968, residents of West Harlem, in New York City, fought unsuccessfully against the siting of a sewage treatment plant in their community.

Ibid.

NAE Resolution, “Stewardship: All for God’s Glory” (1990), accessed August 11, 2016, http://nae.net/stewardship/. The resolution reads in part, “Sadly, some have badly misunderstood the purposes of God’s resources. We see selfish and excessive acquisition at the expense of the world’s natural wealth…And, there are Christians who advocate opulence and extravagance in the name of Christian blessings. The Bible teaches that the world’s resources are to be used, but not abused, and that we will be held responsible for the care, use and stewardship of the world. Christians must take a lead in exercising this God-given responsibility…financial wealth that serves only the selfish interests of the well-to-do are all patently unacceptable and a violation of our responsibility to use these God-given resources in a way that benefits the human race and glorifies God.”
Covenant and the ECI, as already discussed. What was needed now, they decided, was the political will to meet the environmental challenge head on.

The ECI’s 2006 founding statement, “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” had created a stir within evangelical ranks mainly because it supported the science showing anthropogenic causes for climate change, something that did not resonate with all believers for a variety of reasons. It also encouraged Federal mitigation efforts, including the cap-and-trade program, which in later years became very controversial, as a means of reducing the negative impact of climate change, including upon the world’s poor. Further, the Call’s first paragraph made it clear that it was and is a political document intended to sway policy:

As American evangelical Christian leaders, we recognize both our opportunity and our responsibility to offer a biblically based moral witness that can help shape public policy in the most powerful nation on earth, and therefore contribute to the well-being of the entire world. Whether we will enter the public square and offer our witness there is no longer an open question. We are in that square, and we will not withdraw.

47 Evangelical Climate Initiative founding statement, released in February 2006, accessed August 1, 2016, http://www.christiansandclimate.org/statement/. The statement called for reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, and referenced climate science supported by the IPCC and the “U.S. National Academy of Sciences, as well as all other G8 country scientific Academies.”

48 Ibid. Author’s note: Investopedia, accessed August 15, 2016, http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/cap-and-trade.asp#ixzz4HQ9VOPPI, defines cap-and-trade, or emissions trading, as a common term for a government regulatory program designed to limit, or cap, the total level of specific chemical by-products resulting from private business activity. Cap-and-trade's purpose is to create a market price for emissions or pollutants that did not previously exist and address possible negative externalities.

49 Evangelical Climate Initiative, “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” accessed August 15, 2016, http://www.christiansandclimate.org/statement/. Lydia Bean and Steven Teles in “God and Climate,” Democracy, a Journal of Ideas 40 (Spring 2016), accessed August 15, 2016, http://democracyjournal.org/magazine/40/god-and-climate/, offer more detail: in 2006, with funding from the Hewlett and Energy Foundations, the EEN took the lead in launching the Evangelical Climate Initiative by convening a small group of evangelical allies to draft the Call as its founding statement. Core leaders of the ECI began collecting signatures for this statement by sending out letters and holding meetings with senior evangelical leaders. Signatories included the board members of the NAE, presidents of universities in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, and executives of groups affiliated with the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations.
Conservative evangelicals were quick to respond, standing behind the Cornwall Alliance’s rebuttal, which preemptively put out an “Appeal Letter to the National Association of Evangelicals on the Issue of Global Warming.”\(^{50}\) The letter called on the NAE to refrain from taking a public position on climate change, and was accompanied by a round of calls to denominational leaders who were members of the NAE, asking them to put a stop to the NAE’s leadership on climate change.\(^{51}\) In response to the letter, Cizik withdrew his name as a signatory; in an interview with Bill Moyers, Cizik indicated that pressure from his colleagues at the NAE caused him to remove his name from the statement.\(^{52}\) In fact, the NAE’s Executive Committee, responding to twenty evangelical leaders who asked the NAE not to take a stance on global warming, had passed a resolution stating that "global warming is not a consensus issue," and instructing its staff "to stand by and not exceed in any fashion our approved and adopted statements concerning the environment contained within the ‘Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility,’” a document that made no mention of climate change.\(^{53}\) Jerry Falwell when asked if he would sign the “Call” replied, "I said, ‘No.’ Why? I said because I don't believe in global warm-


\(^{51}\) Bean and Teles, “Spreading the Gospel of Climate Change,” 7.


ing in the first place, and I don't believe we caused it, and I don't think the science supports it. And...I don't want to put my name on the same thing Ron Sider has his name on,” along with other “left wing people.”  

The division between the progressive and conservative contingents of evangelicals continued to worsen over the next several years, as Cizik refused to stop advocating for creation care in the public arena. Charles Colson, leader of Prison Fellowship Ministries, lamented that the secular media loved to highlight divisions among Christians over climate change as a way to dismiss the authority of the Christian worldview on issues like abortion. By 2007, the most conservative evangelical leaders were calling for Cizik’s ouster from the NAE, but the organization’s president Leith Anderson responded that his mail was “overwhelmingly supportive” of Cizik, and Cizik himself indicated that he was not going anywhere. Falwell again weighed in, stating, "I am today raising a flag of opposition to this alarmism about global warming and urging all believers to refuse to be duped by these 'earthism' worshippers.”

However, in 2008, when the Southern Baptist declaration on climate change was released, it seemed to illustrate a definitive move towards the center from traditionally

---


56 Many sources have quoted this dialogue, the one cited here is from GetReligion, “Covering the Evangelical Cat Fight,” accessed August 15, 2016, http://www.getreligion.org/getreligion/2007/03/covering-the-evangelical-cat-fight.

conservative-leaning evangelicals, despite attempts from the Southern Baptists’ conservative wing to quash the statement before it was released at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Jonathan Merritt, the young Southern Baptist writer who led the successful effort to publish the declaration, reported receiving a phone call from a research fellow at the SBC’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, who delivered a message attributed to Richard Land, then chief of the commission.58 The caller said that if Merritt went forward with the statement as planned at the National Press Club, Land would “release the full power of the arsenal of his email contact list, sending out an email to every Southern Baptist” challenging Merritt’s credential to speak for Southern Baptists on climate action.59 Cancelling the press club event, Merritt contacted a New York Times reporter who instead announced the release of the SBC declaration in an article published on March 10, 2008.60 In addition to that article, independent stories appeared in major national news outlets including National Public Radio, Time, CNN.com and The Christian Science Monitor; the Los Angeles Times and The Washington Post printed versions of the Associated Press’ story, as did at least thirty-five local newspapers.61 “When it went live,” Merritt said, “it exploded. I was all over the news being interviewed.”62

58 Johnathan Merritt, telephone interview by author, September 2, 2016.

59 Katharine K. Wilkinson, Between God and Green, 116. Author’s interview with Merritt reiterated this exact story.

60 Merritt, telephone interview by author, September 2, 2016.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.
Experts on SBC political and theological views noted that the initiative marked the growing influence of younger leaders on the discussions within the SBC, and Merritt appears to be living proof of that shift.\(^{63}\) Merritt, who had once believed environmentalism was akin to earth worship, had had an epiphany while in a theology class at Southeastern Baptist Seminary. His revelation occurred when “my professor said that when we destroy God's creation it's similar to tearing a page out of the Bible. At that moment I was forced to confront that I had been tearing pages out of the Bible my entire life.”\(^{64}\) Subsequently, Merritt started changing the way he lived. “I started recycling, using less…I started reading through the scientific literature and came to realize that anthropogenic climate change was a legitimate concern, and affected the poor the most.”\(^{65}\) He later connected with EEN and learned about the ECI, and thought, “what if instead of ECI, we did this for the SBC? My dad had been president of SBC. What if we did this and got people to sign? EEN was dumfounded, and said ‘go for it.’”\(^{66}\) Creation care efforts, it appeared, had made significant headway into a historically conservative, and politically powerful, evangelical culture.

Cassandra Carmichael, executive director of the NRPE, says that although the religious right in this country is often portrayed as anti-environment, they represent the best chance of convincing Republican leaders to embrace environmental protections: "I think


\(^{64}\) Merritt, telephone interview by author, September 2, 2016.

\(^{65}\) Ibid.

\(^{66}\) Ibid.
in general the religious community cares very much. They might not refer to it as the environment, that's a word that has political meaning for some people, but when we talk about caring for creation I haven't come across a person of faith who said they didn't think we should care for God's creation," she said. "We look at species protection and conservation from the Noah's Ark story in the Bible. That's where we take our cues."  

Rob Sisson, the director of ConservAmerica, a conservative environmental group urging the Republican Party to reclaim its historical roots as conservationists, agrees with Carmichael, noting that the religious base of the party, along with hunters, fishers, and residents of Western states where debates over public land management resonate strongly, may very well be the best hope for achieving environmental protections. "By definition, conservation is conservative," Sisson says. "Some have tried to characterize some faith leaders as liberals due to their positions on environmental issues. But it isn’t the positions that define left or right, it is the solutions. Given that so many conservative voters self-identify as ‘faith-first’ voters, the efforts by every faith leader and denomination is immensely important." Sisson and his organization are part of a multi-year effort called A Call to Conscience led by representatives of several denominations to connect faith based networks, such as local churches, universities, hospitals, and associations, with their members of Congress.


68 Ibid.

69 Rob Sisson, telephone interview by author, August 4, 2016.

70 Ibid.
The Call to Conscience has had, and will have, a significant impact on the thoughts and positions of many elected leaders, Sisson believes. “We Republicans have always tried to claim the mantle of the party that favors religion — it complicates matters when your constituents, who represent faith groups, call upon you to take action on things like climate change. Mobilizing faith-based voters is one of the key actions environmentalists can do to achieve its goals.” Moreover, “the rank and file support of people who identify as conservatives is very strong for conservation policy, and I think it never really went away. I think the attention got diverted, and we weren't really paying attention, but now we're starting to realize our party has at best ignored conservation issues for last decade or more, and we need to pay attention to this. We were once undisputed champions of conservation.”

The Politics of Creation Care: Lobbying and Persuasion

An unprecedented and overtly political evangelical effort in support of creation care occurred in November 2009 when a diverse group of scientists and evangelicals joined forces on Capitol Hill to brief Senators on the most recent climate change science, in part with the hope of persuading them to support a climate bill (the American Clean Energy and Security Act, H.R. 2454), which passed the House in June 2009. Ultimately, the bill did not pass the Senate and was never made into law, but the meeting made

---

71 Ibid.


lines across the country and internationally due to the collaborative partnership that had formed between secular climate scientists and well known evangelical groups. The meeting was also significant for the implicit threat it represented to an established Republican-based constituency that was used to evangelical support. Evangelical climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe believes that the climate bill is the reason that evangelicalism was, in the end, “hijacked” by political ideology: “Climate scientists had been warning about an environmental crisis for more than fifty years, but climate science had never been an imminent corporate threat until the House approved Waxman-Markey,” making its passage into law a possibility.74

It is important to this discussion to understand the development process, including some early history, of how two such disparate communities — evangelicals and scientists — came together in the intertwined cause of environmental justice and creation care. In addition to Cizik, many other prominent voices were involved in the Hill meeting, and continue to be intimately involved in the theological/scientific conversation on creation care. One of those voices belongs to Dr. Eric Chivian, founder and director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard’s School of Public Health. The center focuses on the human health dimensions of global environmental change, and has also been designated as an official “collaborating center” of the United Nations Environment

74 Katharine Hayhoe, telephone interview by author, June 24, 2016. Hayhoe has also co-authored reports for the U.S. Global Change Research Program, as well as National Academy of Sciences reports, including the 3rd National Climate Assessment, released on May 6, 2014. She has also served as an expert reviewer for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report.
Programme.\textsuperscript{75} The recipient of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize, Chivian has spent more than two decades working to involve American and international physicians in environmental protection efforts, and to increase public understanding of the potential health consequences of environmental degradation and climate change.

Chivian and Cizik first met in 2005, when they began a dialogue about the historic enmity and distrust that existed between many scientists and evangelicals, even though both communities shared a certain “reverence for the earth…a profound concern about what human activity was doing to it, and together…an enormously powerful role to play in helping to reduce the threat from escalating changes to the global environment.”\textsuperscript{76} Two years later, they convened a meeting of their respective organizations to talk about the science supporting environmental protection, and what to do about it as a combined community of faith and science leaders. That meeting evolved into the Scientists and Evangelicals Initiative (SEI), at Harvard.\textsuperscript{77} In January 2007, SEI issued a landmark statement entitled \textit{An Urgent Call to Action: Scientists and Evangelicals Unite to Protect Creation}, signed by twenty-eight leaders of the science and faith communities. The statement made headlines worldwide in most major markets, and was also sent to President George W. Bush, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, bipartisan congressional leaders, and national evangelical and scientific organizations. The missive urged fundamental changes

\textsuperscript{75} Center for Health and the Global Environment website, accessed May 1, 2016, \url{http://www.chgeharvard.org/}.

\textsuperscript{76} Eric Chivian and Richard Cizik, “Uniting to Protect the Creation,” \url{pbs.org}, accessed July 30, 2016, \url{http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/343/protect-creation.html}.

\textsuperscript{77} Scientists and Evangelicals website, accessed August 10, 2016, \url{http://www.chgeharvard.org/programs/scientists-and-evangelicals-initiative}. 

103
in values, lifestyles, and public policies to address the worsening problems of climate change before it is too late. Of particular note is the emphasis on shared values between the science and evangelical communities, specifically in terms of a shared “moral purpose” with regard to environmental justice:

We believe that the protection of life on Earth is a profound moral imperative…It requires a new moral awakening to a compelling demand, clearly articulated in Scripture and supported by science, that we must steward the natural world in order to preserve for ourselves and future generations a beautiful, rich, and healthful environment….One fundamental motivation that we share is concern for the poorest of the poor, well over a billion people, who have little chance to improve their lives in devastated and often war-ravaged environments. At the same time, the natural environments in which they live, and where so much of Earth's biodiversity barely hangs on, cannot survive the press of destitute people without other resources and with nowhere else to go.

The SEI did not survive Cizik’s departure from the NAE, but he says that informal partnerships between evangelical and science organizations do exist in other areas based upon the breakthroughs made by the SEI and the Hill meeting. In 2013, a group of two hundred evangelical scientists urged Congress to take action as soon as possible to address the impact of climate change. In a press conference at which they announced the release of a letter sent to Congress, the scientists said their faith compels them to call on lawmakers to cease the debate and pass legislation as soon as possible that reduces car-

---

78 Scientists and Evangelicals Initiative, An Urgent Call to Action: Scientists and Evangelicals Unite to Protect Creation, Jan. 17, 2007, accessed July 10, 2016, http://www-tc.pbs.org/now/shows/343/letter.pdf. Author’s note: In 2008, Cizik and Chivian were named (as a team), to the list of the 100 most influential scientists and thinkers by Time magazine for their innovative work on climate change issues.

79 Ibid.

80 Cizik, phone interview with author, October 6, 2012. According to Cizik, the SEI was a “partnership of the two” between him and Chivian which included substantial fundraising by Chivian on behalf of the initiative. Cizik departed the NAE in December 2008 due to backlash against comments he made earlier that month on National Public Radio’s Fresh Air program regarding his support for same-sex civil unions and his early support of President-elect Barack Obama.
bon emissions which are threatening God’s creation.\textsuperscript{81} “All of God's Creation — humans and our environment — is groaning under the weight of our uncontrolled use of fossil fuels, bringing on a warming planet, melting ice, and rising seas,” the letter reads in part.\textsuperscript{82} One important lesson Cizik learned, however, was that not everyone responds positively to scientific pronouncements regarding the environment: “Social sciences is the way to look at creation care in a new paradigm, not the physical sciences…Evangelical cooperation with social scientists who can communicate climate findings in way that resonates with the public is what’s needed.”\textsuperscript{83}

AuSable’s DeWitt, another galvanizing voice at the Hill meeting, agrees with Cizik. As an evangelical who is also a respected zoologist and biologist, DeWitt believes green evangelicals will continue to move into the political realm because they do not have the traditional structures and hierarchies found in mainline denominations and therefore will speak their minds. Evangelicals, DeWitt has said, “can change at the drop of a hat” because they are guided by the Bible, not traditional church orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{84} With regard to creation care, if the science of climate change makes sense to an evangelical from a

\textsuperscript{81} Christian Reformed Church website, “Scientists Call for Creation Care Laws,” July 15, 2013, accessed August 21, 2016, \url{https://www.crcna.org/news-and-views/scientists-call-creation-care-laws}. The press conference was held by the Academy of Evangelical Scientists and Ethicists to announce the release of a letter that it sent to Congress.

\textsuperscript{82} Evangelical Scientists Initiative letter, accessed August 21, 2016, \url{https://sojo.net/sites/default/files/Evangelical\%20Scientists\%20Initiative\%20Letter.pdf}.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. According to the American Association for the Advancement of Science website, accessed August 12, 2016, \url{https://www.aaas.org/page/science-evangelical-christians}, the AAAS has made outreach to evangelicals a priority, including in the area of climate change, due to the large numbers of people who identify as such.

\textsuperscript{84} David Roberts interview with Calvin DeWitt, October 17, 2006, accessed February 16, 2017, Grist.org. \url{http://grist.org/article/dewitt/}. 
faith standpoint, an evangelical could potentially have a “wholesale conversion” on the issue.\textsuperscript{85} “In order to live and act rightly in the world, we need to know how the world works: science. (However), knowing the science and observing the ethics of this stewardship framework does absolutely no good if it is not put into practice,” DeWitt cautions.\textsuperscript{86} Furthermore, “The Bible is an ecological handbook…I shock some of these evangelical congregations by saying Jesus almost always taught on field trips…Jesus was earthy.”\textsuperscript{87} DeWitt believes that evangelicals have made Jesus “overly spiritualized and cleansed from his dirty hands as a carpenter and gardener. The Amish know that very well, and the evangelicals are just discovering it. And that’s where the great turn is (with regard to creation care), because they are used to conversion. They turn on a dime.”\textsuperscript{88} For example, the Sabbath of the land plays into how evangelicals view the environment, and it has been variously interpreted, including as a metaphor for “how we have to take care of our rivers, our lakes, streams, soil.”\textsuperscript{89} But the focus on the individual and the family, initially attractive because it addressed regaining an evangelical voice in government and policy matters, has shifted:

If you’re only focusing on the family, to the neglect of your wider community, which is eventually the whole of the biosphere and the whole of creation, you can actually do yourself in by taking too narrow of a focus. We’re moving from a fo-

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Roberts interview with DeWitt.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid. Text in parenthesis is author’s.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. Sabbath of the land speaks to allowing arable land to rest every seventh year, found in various books of the Bible, most prominently in Leviticus. For concise listing of references see: ecclesia.org, accessed August 1, 2016, http://www.ecclesia.org/truth/sabbath-land.html.
cus on ourselves…to incorporating the whole household of life, the whole biosphere, the whole creation, without which family and individuals really can’t function at all.\textsuperscript{90}

Gushee was another influential pro-environment evangelical voice involved in the Hill meeting. One of the founders of the NEP along with Cizik, Gushee is the principal author of the ECI's call, which currently includes more than three hundred senior evangelical leaders in the United States who are supportive of the call for protecting creation.\textsuperscript{91} Gushee is on record repeatedly describing what he sees as an ideological fracture within the American evangelical community, wherein the left and the right are competing for the center. While the left has been working on environmental issues for at least three decades, the right has consistently been indifferent to any environmental concerns, including policy initiatives. The reasons include "suspicion of scientific claims of the extent of environmental damage, especially climate damage, and an alliance and involvement with a libertarian free market economy that wants limited government intervention or regulation in the economy anyway…So the right has always been dragging its feet" with regard to creation care.\textsuperscript{92}

Gushee believes that one of the reasons that creation care took a nose dive after 2008, aside from the economic downturn and Cizik's departure from the NAE, was that:

The climate change problem was finally beginning to get a lot of international attention; the IPCC documents were being seen as authoritative and really important. We...reached into the evangelical center and got a fair amount of

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{91} Evangelical Call to Action, accessed August 12, 2016, \url{http://www.npr.org/documents/2006/feb/evangelical/calla.pdf}. Updated signatories list found at: \url{http://www.christiansandclimate.org/}.

\textsuperscript{92} Gushee, telephone interview by author, August 8, 2012.
support...and the right was back on its heels having to retreat from saying climate change is a hoax to, well, climate is changing but who knows what's causing it or how serious it will be to, OK, humans are causing it but we don't know the best ways to deal with it, to, OK, we need to do some things but we don't want to affect the poor too much by regulatory effort.\textsuperscript{93}

The result years later, Gushee says, was a fairly successful lobbying campaign from the traditionally conservative side to downplay environmental problems, which did effectively resonate with many evangelicals, especially when played against economic priorities and jobs. But the progressive voice never died, it “just got out-maneuvered and drowned out by the Christian right. Now I think it has essentially coalesced along culture war lines. Progressive evangelicals track with the Democratic agenda, conservatives track with Republican.”\textsuperscript{94}

Stoll believes that the term “fracture” may be too strong a word to describe the division between progressive and conservative voices, but “clearly there is a generational difference” with younger evangelicals seeming to be more open to environmental action.\textsuperscript{95} Stoll understands this to be “an effect of the fading of the 1970s culture wars over time.”\textsuperscript{96} With regard to social justice, he has observed that hierarchical churches, such as Catholic, Anglican-Methodist, and Orthodox, have tended to place environmental issues in the broader context of social justice, with the Catholic position being particularly well developed. He also sees this tendency “in churches from the Reformed tradition

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{94} Gushee, interview by author, March 5, 2016.

\textsuperscript{95} Mark Stoll, email interview by author, August 8, 2016.

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
(United Church of Christ, Presbyterian), based historically on the Reformed goal of a godly society. However, churches that place a high value on evangelism and a personal relationship with God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit tend towards individualistic, non-governmental solutions to environmental problems.”

The tendency towards non-intervention, especially for conservative evangelicals, is a major reason that there is distrust of progressive or “liberal” leaning believers, who are often perceived as working for regulating authorities. The foremost example is EEN, the most politically active of evangelical environmental organizations, which is home to the most vocal proponents of creation care. The organization is currently co-led by Rev. Jim Ball of the 2002 “What Would Jesus Drive?” campaign, which quickly became a rallying cry for creation care enthusiasts, and also gained impressive traction with the general public which went a long way towards injecting progressive evangelical voices into the secular sphere. The campaign was a play on the well-known question, “What Would Jesus Do?” Christians ask themselves, which translates into “Lord, what would you have me do?” The specific question then becomes, “Lord, what would you have me drive?” because “transportation is a moral issue” with environmental impacts. Primarily fo-

---

97 Ibid.

98 What Would Jesus Drive website, accessed July 30, 2016, http://www.whatwouldjesusdrive.info/intro.php. According to the website, by April 2003 more than 4,000 media stories had featured “WWJD” including national television coverage on 60 Minutes; NBC Nightly News; ABC's World News Tonight, Good Morning America, and This Week with George Stephanopoulos; Fox News, and the O'Reiley Factor; NOW with Bill Moyers, CNN's Crossfire, Inside Politics, Talkback Live, and all-day Headline News coverage on Nov. 20, 2003 (with more people emailing the story from CNN's website to friends that day than any other story). It received international coverage in England, France, Germany, Spain, Australia, and South Africa, among others.

99 Ibid.
cused on global warming because it was projected to hit the poor the hardest, the campaign urged Christians to “take appropriate actions to address the problems associated with our transportation choices,” including limiting personal vehicle travel, as well as urging government leaders to support public transportation, increases in fuel economy standards, and research and development for promising new transportation technologies that reduce pollution and increase fuel efficiency. Ball, who was very a public proponent of the Obama administration's 2025 fuel economy standards, is one of the most politically active evangelical supporters of creation care, and has forged links between EEN and secular organizations such as the Sierra Club that have resulted in measurable progress in moving environmental legislation forward, as will be discussed in future chapters. Ball also serves on the board of EEN's Young Adult Ministries, which he hopes one day will issue a joint statement on behalf of climate care with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Ball generally agrees with Gushee's assessment of the downward trajectory of the attention paid to creation care, but does not believe that evangelical concern for the environment will ever disappear now that the youth contingent is mobilized. Evangelical environmental organizations like Blessed Earth and Restoring Eden are becoming increasingly politically active, in part by partnering with secular and governmental organizations.

---

100 Ibid. These actions include: to walk, bike, carpool, and use public transportation more; to purchase the most fuel efficient and least polluting vehicle available that fits need; to educate others about the moral concerns and solutions associated with transportation; to encourage automobile manufacturers to produce the most fuel efficient and least polluting vehicles possible that fit the needs of the American people; and, to urge government leaders to support environmentally-friendly legislation and transportation options.

101 Jim Ball, telephone interview by author, December 9, 2012.
tions. Restoring Eden, for example, played a major role along with EEN in getting the Roadless Rule passed towards the end of the Clinton administration by working with the United States Forest Service, which saved nearly sixty million acres of wild national forest land. When Ball met with one of the heads of the Forest Service, Jim Furnish, regarding how EEN could possibly assist with passing the rule, he was surprised: "turns out he's an evangelical. He now sits on EEN's board."

Not all faith-based leaders who consider themselves good stewards of creation believe that global warming is an environmental problem, however. Just days ahead of the 2009 international conference on global environment issues in Copenhagen, Beisner’s Cornwall Alliance issued their own “Declaration on Environmental Stewardship” as a rebuttal to the “green dragon” of environmentalism. The organization also issued a document entitled “A Renewed Call to Truth, Prudence and Protection of the Poor,” stating that “global warming alarmism fails the tests of theology, science, and economics.” Former Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum was widely quoted as saying President Obama’s environmental policies were based in “phony theology,” a term bor-

---

102 Ibid. Roadless area conservation is a policy that limits road construction and the resulting environmental impact on designated areas of public land. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, accessed August 1, 2016, http://www.fs.usda.gov, the rule has been challenged many times but never overturned.

103 Ibid. Author’s note: according to WesternLaw.org, accessed January 18, 2017, Furnish sat on EEN’s board for six years, and now serves on the advisory board for the Western Environmental Law Center and the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, both in Eugene, Oregon.


rowed in part from the Alliance's stance against “radical environmentalism,” which makes very effective use of fringe environmental groups' activities to get the anti-climate change point across.\footnote{DailyKos website, accessed August 12, 2016, http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/02/26/1068550-/The-Hunt-for-the-Green-Dragon.} Although the Alliance’s position papers are not given much credence by the majority of recognized climate scientists,\footnote{An example of a scientific rebuttal to a Cornwall paper was published in Remote Sensing in 2011, accessed August 12, 2016, https://www.facingsouth.org/2011/09/climate-science-contrarian-roys-spencers-oil-industry-ties.html.} that fact does not hinder the Alliance's ability to effectively communicate its message to a large swath of the evangelical community.

However, Cizik says that there is more far-reaching support among religious communities on climate change than is currently understood, especially for the younger generations. “These evangelicals have an intensity level that even some in the environmental community don’t have. They believe this is their God-given calling…When you realize you have missed something — as I did when I had a conversion on these issues — you become like a new convert to the faith, a passionate activist.”\footnote{Suzanne Goldenberg, “US Evangelicals Warm to Climate Change Science in Capitol Hill Campaign,” The Guardian, accessed March 9, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2009/nov/18/evangelical-christians-climate-science.} Cizik has long been convinced that young evangelicals will not, in the end, buy into the anti-science bias of their parents, and this will be a major factor in the sustainability of creation care: "Revolution is on its way. It's a slow-moving earthquake...This is not your father's evangelicalism."\footnote{Richard Cizik, telephone interview by author, October 6, 2012.}
The collaborative effort between the science and religious communities in general is not new. In 1990, seven years before the JRI came into being, a group of thirty-four prominent scientists wrote an open letter to faith communities calling for their support in addressing the issue of anthropogenic climate change.110 Of the peril to planetary environment they wrote, “Problems of such magnitude and solutions demanding so broad a perspective must be recognized from the outset as having a religious as well as a scientific dimension…Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred.”111 A year later, religious leaders from around the world responded with a letter of their own, “The Joint Appeal in Religion and Science: Statement by Religious Leaders at the Summit on Environment.”112 Seven of the twenty-four signatories are evangelical-affiliated, including the former executive director of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, and individuals from Asbury Seminary, the American Baptist Church, the National Baptist Convention, and the National Council of Churches of Christ.113 The letter states, in part:

We believe a consensus now exists, at the highest level of leadership across a significant spectrum of religious traditions, that the cause of environmental integrity and justice must occupy a position of utmost priority for people of faith. Response to this issue can and must cross traditional religious and political lines. It has the potential to unify and renew religious life.114

111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
A result of the collaboration was a series of conferences at Harvard and the subsequent publication of ten edited volumes examining views of nature in the world’s religions, which culminated in the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, “the largest international multireligious project of its kind…engaged in exploring religious worldviews, texts, and ethics in order to broaden understanding of the complex nature of current environmental concerns.”

Former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt has said that faith is pushing the climate movement closer to real change. “Political tipping points do come,” he says, “and they change us overnight.” YECA illustrates the shift occurring within evangelical youth relative to the acceptance of climate science. Founded in 2012, the organization focuses on the under-thirty youth contingent, and its founder, Ben Lowe, the son of two missionaries, states that the organization is “looking for more than just discussion. We are looking for the church to actually do something to overcome the climate crisis,” including “supporting our faith leaders when they stand up for climate action, holding our political leaders accountable for responsible climate policies, and mobilizing our generation and the larger church community to join in.” With regard to climate science, Lowe admits that “there has been a distrust of science in some parts of the evangelical community,” but “there are a lot of evangelical scientists and secular scientists who are trying to bridge the

---


gap on this. That’s one of the things (we’re working on): to help evangelicals take good science more seriously.”\(^{118}\) To that end, the YECA website includes prominent links to climate studies conducted by respected, recognized mainstream research institutions and scientists, including the most recent IPCC report.\(^{119}\) Additionally, members of YECA met with former senior political officials like Dan Utech, deputy assistant to President Obama for energy and climate change, and Nancy Sutley, former chair of the administration’s Council on Environmental Quality, in support of climate-friendly legislation.\(^{120}\) In 2015, a YECA contingent also marched in the Forward on Climate Rally at the National Mall. Lowe believes the “A vast majority (of the evangelical community) aren’t against climate action,” Lowe says, “they just have questions and they’re looking for answers…A lot of the time the conversation hasn’t been done well.”\(^{121}\) Politically, Lowe says that YECA will continue to raise its voice in support of climate and energy policy that will mitigate climate change, “And we will be eager to hear from any candidates from any party looking to support good, thoughtful, and supportive initiatives to address climate change moving into the future.”\(^{122}\)

YECA’s current director, Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, believes that “young Christians reject the choice between checking their faith or their brains at the door. They want to act

\(^{118}\) Ibid.

\(^{119}\) YECA website, accessed August 17, 2016, http://www.yecaction.org/climate_change_science. Reports available by link include those done under the auspices of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, The Royal Society and the Public Interest Research Centre. No Cornwall Alliance reports are listed.

\(^{120}\) Grist online, accessed August 17, 2016, http://grist.org/living/pro-life-equals-pro-planet-for-this-green-evangelical-leader/.

\(^{121}\) Ibid.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.
because of their faith, not in spite of it. Until now, they’ve had few opportunities.\footnote{Kyle Meynard-Schaap, telephone interview by author, September 15, 2016.} When YECA was founded in 2012, there were twelve members; today there are eleven thousand, and the organization has set a goal of twenty-five thousand members by 2021.\footnote{Ibid.} To that end, YECA has just completed its first five year strategic plan.\footnote{YECA Strategic Plan 2016-2021, accessed March 10, 2017, http://www.yecaction.org/strategic_plan.} “Prior to this we operated on a year-to-year basis…But now we’re more mature and stable” as an organization, and “we wanted to chart out a longer plan.”\footnote{Ibid.} The plan includes seven objectives that represent a robust and confident expansion: constituency development, increased diversity, integration of faith and action, increased civic engagement in terms of policy, fund raising, deeper engagement with senior evangelical leaders, and communications — especially on social media.\footnote{Ibid.}

Meyaard-Schaap thinks that there's been an energizing of evangelical groups since the ECI and other efforts mobilized the grasstops. And, “at the same time there was a building at the grassroots level which is continuing to flower,” which he believes may “be a product of more resources being directed at grassroots rather than grasstops…That's one of the reasons it's so important that we engage with senior leadership. If there’s a disconnect I hope that YECA can help.”\footnote{Kyle Meynard-Schaap, telephone interview by author, September 15, 2016.} With regard to social justice and science, Meynard-Schaap reiterates that it all goes back to the evolution debate, and the distrust of
science threatening the Christian worldview. However, he says, the Christian worldview also hews to the sanctity of the unborn. “We want to work for a world that the unborn can flourish in, and there’s a lot of scientific evidence that points to harm from pollutants on the unborn.” Instead, he advocates reframing the evolution issue:

I think what’s been most effective for evangelicals is not abandoning the science, but putting it on the shelf for now, and framing climate change as moral and ethical issue, not a scientific or political issue. Let's look at the Scriptures. We don't have to get caught in a fraught debate that’s doomed before it gets off the ground. Once the moral argument is accepted, the science isn’t a barrier. It doesn’t matter. There is no limit to Christian compassion and concern. Humans, including the unborn, are inextricably bound up in creation and in the structures of the environment. Climate change is the ultimate life issue.

Whatever the reason, evangelicals as a group today appear to be open to the idea that science and religion are mostly compatible, based upon several recent surveys. According to Pew, of the United States’ major religious groups, Hispanic Catholics and white evangelical Protestants are especially likely to say science and religion are mostly compatible; roughly half of both groups take this position. On the forty-fifth anniversary of Earth Day, 2015, the NAE released results from its Evangelical Leaders Survey survey that focused on the government’s role in cleaning up the environment. That survey showed ninety-six percent of the country’s evangelical leaders support government initiatives to clean up air and water, indicating that evangelicals may not be as antagonistic to

---

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid.

131 Pew website, accessed August 16, 2016, [http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/22/science-and-religion/](http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/22/science-and-religion/). White evangelical Protestants also are somewhat more likely than members of other large religious groups to see a conflict between science and their own religious beliefs; forty percent of white evangelicals say their personal beliefs sometimes conflict with science, while fifty-seven percent say they do not.
science as they are often portrayed.\textsuperscript{132} EEN president Mitch Hescox said, “Just as we need police officers to patrol our highways, we need law enforcement to defend our rights to pure air and clean water. After abortion, the greatest threats to our pre-born children are the toxins we spew into God’s creation.”\textsuperscript{133} According to survey results presented at a conference organized by AAAS on misperceptions between scientists and members of religious communities, nearly fifty percent of self-described evangelicals believe that science and religion can work together and support one another, in contrast to only thirty-eight percent of Americans who feel that science and religion can work in collaboration. Further, the survey showed two million out of nearly twelve million scientists identify as evangelical Christians.\textsuperscript{134} “This is a hopeful message for science policymakers and educators, because the two groups don’t have to approach religion with an attitude of combat,” study author Elaine Howard Ecklund said; rather, they should approach it with collaboration in mind.”\textsuperscript{135} Ecklund believes that the way the science-religion relationship is portrayed in the news media influences the misperception. The concern is not whether “sci-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{132} NAE website, accessed August 15, 2016, \url{http://nae.net/nae-leaders-support-action-on-clean-air-water-2/}.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Ibid., \url{http://nae.net/nae-leaders-support-action-on-clean-air-water-2/}.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Elaine Howard Ecklund, sociologist and director of Rice University’s Religion and Public Life Program, quoted by David Ruth in “Misconceptions of Science and Religion Found in New Study,” accessed August 16, 2016, \url{http://news.rice.edu/2014/02/16/misconceptions-of-science-and-religion-found-in-new-study/#sthash.rxW1HPpe.dpuf}. Study may be accessed at: \url{http://elainehowardecklund.blogs.rice.edu/files/2014/02/RU_AAASPresentationNotes_2014_0220.pdf}.
\end{itemize}
ence and religion can co-exist. They already do,” she said. “The question is how to do it well.”

A lobbyist whose organization collaborates with evangelical groups believes the issue with policymakers who are resistant to environmental legislation is not necessarily because they do not believe in climate science. Rather, they have indicated that it is a matter of having appropriate political cover, or a “moral frame,” to protect their political interests. A case in point is the Gibson Resolution, introduced by New York Republican Congressman Chris Gibson in late 2015, which recognizes the impact of climate change, including on vulnerable populations, and calls for action to reduce future risk. Joined by thirteen Republican colleagues, Gibson’s resolution represents a major breakthrough among Republicans, and is the first formal and affirmative statement on climate disruption by a group of elected Republicans in Congress since 2008.

The genesis of the resolution was an interfaith moral “Call to Conscience on Climate Disruption” that two Christian lobbying organizations worked to facilitate. The resolution reads in part, “If left unaddressed, the consequences of a changing climate have the potential to adversely impact all Americans,” and concludes that the House should commit to “working constructively, using our tradition of American ingenuity, innova-


137 Lobbyist, telephone interview by author, August 16, 2016. Interviewee requested anonymity.


tion, and exceptionalism, to create and support economically viable, and broadly support-
ed private and public solutions to study and address the causes and effects of measured
changes to our global and regional climates, including mitigation efforts and efforts to
balance human activities that have been found to have an impact.”¹⁴⁰

The Gibson Resolution is what the lobbyist calls a “process win,” with the goal
being to get House Republicans to first admit anthropogenic climate change needed to be
addressed.¹⁴¹ “The process win sets you up for the substance win, and we needed to work
delicately with these Republican offices, as (another evangelical lobbying organization)
does,” without “hammering anyone…We needed to create a safe space to talk about cli-
mate change, which creates a safe space for talking about legislative solutions.”¹⁴² Until
that time, said the lobbyist, “we don't want media on us. There are a lot of collaborations
such as ours going on that the media does not report and we don't want them to report,
intentionally. Credibility is very important.”¹⁴³

The two lobbying organizations working together on the Gibson Resolution and
other initiatives are religious, however, they represent two different Christian traditions,
one of which is evangelical, and one of which is considered “too liberal” by traditional
evangelical standards. So for more than three years, the organizations separately lobbied

resolution/424/text.

¹⁴¹ Lobbyist, telephone interview with author, August 16, 2016. The resolution reads in part:
“Whereas increased pollutants and other factors contribute” to dangerous environmental degradation.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.
Gibson and other Republican members to support the resolution without officially announcing their collaboration within their respective organizations or in meetings with Congressional members. The effort was a labor intensive process of identifying minor Republicans who were open to climate science, and then putting together interfaith delegations in those districts to meet with legislators or staff to acknowledge the reality of climate change. After “about fifty or so meetings,” the resolution was drafted in 2014, and then the lobbying organizations worked “behind the scenes and on the grass roots level to get ten additional Republicans to join the resolution, which was introduced a week before Pope Francis’ address to Congress,” according to the lobbyist.144 “The United States Council of Bishops agreed to it too after we told them the Pope was calling for a dialogue on climate change, and that's what this was.”145

The text of the resolution represents a conservative framework intentionally, due to the political rhetoric surrounding the topic of climate change. However, it also opens the door for Republicans searching for the “moral framework” within which to act, including those who respect climate science and want to reclaim what some believe is their party’s abandoned legacy of conservation. The resolution is supported by people of faith at both the grassroots and national levels, including an interfaith letter sent to Congress in September of 2015 by thirty-four national faith leaders, which states that climate change is so great a challenge that it transcends political, faith, and social divides.146

---

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid.

The Gibson Resolution is just one of the latest efforts in a long history of evangelical creation care lobbying campaigns. One of the most notable early examples of successful lobbying, and arguably the most well known, involved the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which EEN was widely credited for saving in 1996 when the act came under threat from a new Republican Congress that intended to gut it.\footnote{Sierra Club website, accessed August 12, 2016, http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/199605/priorities.asp. The author’s interviews with Jim Ball and Rich Cizik corroborated EEN’s work on behalf of the ESA. The ESA was first passed in 1973 with bipartisan support.} EEN successfully lobbied Congress not to “sink the Noah’s Ark of our day,” much to the delight of conservation organizations, but to the dismay of conservatives both evangelical and secular.\footnote{The New York Times, accessed December 8, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/31/us/evangelical-group-defends-laws-protecting-endangered-species-amodern-noah-s-ark.html.} The EEN’s ability to garner widespread media coverage, combined with an ability to speak the language of born-again Christians, was (literally) the salvation of the act, and Ball was instrumental in saving the legislation. Today, EEN is working with other religious organizations, such as the Noah Alliance to help protect the law.\footnote{Noah Alliance, accessed August 12, 2016, http://www.noahna.org/#/home/} 

In addition to the ESA and the aforementioned Roadless Rule that Restoring Eden championed, evangelical influence can be seen in more recent environmental legislative efforts as well. EEN’s youth ministry group successfully lobbied pro-life legislators on both sides of the aisle to get the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) passed by the EPA in 2011.\footnote{Environmental Protection Agency website, accessed August 12, 2016, http://www.epa.gov/airquality/powerplanttoxics/.} “We presented it as a pro-life issue,” said Lowe who then was working for EEN, “we were told that it was due to our lobbying that the standards finally were
passed” by Congress.\textsuperscript{151} However, “we really weren’t sure if it was going to go through, mainly due to Senator Inofe,” who had been an outspoken critic of environmental legislation for years.\textsuperscript{152} But, Lowe said EEN’s support for MATS was a no-brainer: “Mercury impacts unborn babies the most. EEN President Mitch Hescox was in direct contact with (then-EPA Administrator) Lisa Jackson, the White House and the American Lung Association on this issue. We had radio ads, billboards…it was a very big campaign.”\textsuperscript{153} While not applauded in conservative circles, the passage of MATS with evangelical support was widely reported by environmentally-related press organizations.\textsuperscript{154}

Choosing which Congressional members to involve in these efforts can be somewhat arbitrary, at least at first, according to Lowe. “In terms of who to lobby, it’s often based on going to meetings where we see an opening or previous interest in environmental work.”\textsuperscript{155} Efforts to support the RESTORE the Gulf Shore Act, passed due in large part to evangelical efforts, included a letter signed by Hescox, Wallis of Sojourners, and more than one hundred forty other religious leaders.\textsuperscript{156} In addition to lobbying on the Hill, EEN held a day of prayer for the Gulf and undertook a prayer walk with legislators,

\textsuperscript{151} Ben Lowe, telephone interview by author, November 13, 2012.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{155} Ben Lowe, telephone interview by author, November 13, 2012.

emphasizing the suffering caused by the BP oil spill on poor populations, wildlife and the environment.  

More recently, EEN was involved in the bipartisan passage of the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2016. Through the Pro-Life Clean Energy Campaign, EEN led an effort that resulted in five hundred thousand pro-life Christians supporting a goal of one hundred percent clean energy from renewables by 2030. The Act, according to Hescox, “provides some modest steps in this direction,” including reauthorization of the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Hescox wrote on EEN’s blog:

Using royalties from offshore drilling, and without costing taxpayers a dime… LWCF has helped our country protect 2.2 million acres in all fifty states, and is responsible for more than forty thousand state and local outdoor recreation projects. Our national parks and public lands…are a gift from God that must be cherished and preserved.

The ability of an evangelical environmental organization like EEN to influence national environmental policy should not be underestimated. A representative from EPA indicated that there is a measurable benefit in involving the faith community in environmental endeavors, especially communities as politically active as evangelicals. When pressed on whether evangelicals have been instrumental in actually getting environmental legislation passed at the national level, the representative said, “I think the answer is


159 Ibid.

160 EPA representative, telephone interview by author, August 15, 2016. Interviewee requested anonymity.
yes…Without question evangelicals have had an impact on legislation…It gets the attention of legislators that you have the evangelical community siding with environmentalists.\textsuperscript{161} The passage of MATS serves as an example:

EEN marshaled a couple hundred thousand supportive testimonies and letters on behalf of the mercury regulations. They’ve directly gone at policy in a very successful way…I think the idea of people representing a community that is by and large seen as conservative going in (to EPA) and talking knowledgeably and passionately about climate change and regulation has had a big impact and will continue to do so.\textsuperscript{162}

While EPA involvement with evangelicals on environmental issues may not be surprising, a lesser known collaborative national partner is found within the United States Department of State (State). Due to the Hatch Act, representatives from the executive branch of the Federal government are prohibited from lobbying Congress, but a representative from State says that the departmental philosophy is to engage with anyone interested who wants to support the United States position on climate change and the environment, and “give religious groups a seat at the table and also keep them informed.”\textsuperscript{163} The unwritten understanding is that these groups have significant sway over Congress and have been “critical in getting moderate Republicans on board with climate” including fostering interactions with EEN, NRPE and the Interfaith Power and Light (IPL) groups.\textsuperscript{164} From State’s perspective, finding alliances through public diplomacy both domestically

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid. Language in parenthesis are author’s for clarification.

\textsuperscript{163} State Department representative, telephone interview by author, September 1, 2016. Interviewee requested anonymity.

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
and internationally is instrumental in cultivating positive influence on foreign and domestic policies and initiatives. One initiative is the Green Climate Fund, which is critical to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP). State counts on religious groups such as evangelicals to “help develop legislative and community support” for this type of initiative, as “this is a key part of the base State is trying to activate to support the administration’s objectives.”

The State Department’s main contact within the evangelical community is EEN’s Mitch Hescox, and within a broader religious context, NRPE’s Cassandra Carmichael, the interfaith organization Greenfaith and the National Religious Coalition on Creation care. However, “many evangelical groups view ‘interfaith’ as a four-letter word, so they work behind the scenes or not at all,” the representative said.

A second State representative says that traditional evangelicals do not have a problem with efficient economic practices as part of an environmental ethic, such as embracing energy savings for corporations or churches by installing EPA-approved energy-saving light bulbs or water-efficient faucets. Likewise, the idea of clean air standards, for example, is not polarizing the way climate change is, especially given the support evangelicals show for children’s health. “Going forward, I don’t think we’ll have as much of a binary division” between evangelicals and environmental efforts because of the ‘local-
“...ness’ of these efforts and good business practices.” Some of those local efforts at the grassroots levels will be discussed next.

\[168\] State Department representative (second), telephone by author, October 6, 2016. Interviewee requested anonymity.
One of the things that remains unclear is how far into the laity the creation care idea has reached, including at the state and local levels as well as in evangelical churches. Some evangelicals on both sides of the equation, such as Beisner and Gushee, believe the conversation remains among the elites and has not made its way into the pews in a significant way. That thesis is supported by data showing that only eleven percent of white evangelicals reported hearing about environmental issues in church.\(^1\) Gushee believes that, “like a lot of things in politics right now, there is more happening (with creation care) at the local than national levels. Like drinking water in Flint…You can see things happening successfully there with evangelicals….Things are much more stalled at national level.”\(^2\) However, he believes that:

\[
\ldots \text{regarding things (the Obama) administration has done like increasing fuel efficiency standards, or other incremental things, I don't think you've heard howls of evangelical opposition. (But) I think as always there's relatively low salience; whether for or against, most evangelicals just aren't into the environment. But some are, mainly younger people.}\]

\(^3\)

Cizik and Ball have long said they believe the interest in creation care amongst evangelicals is increasing over time, especially within youth groups, and the proliferation

---

\(^1\) Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, “Many Americans Hear Politics From the Pulpit,” August 8, 2016, accessed August 16, 2016, \[http://www.pewforum.org/2016/08/08/many-americans-hear-politics-from-the-pulpit/\]. Nine percent report hearing about the need to protect the environment, one percent report that they hear negative things about environmental regulation, and two percent report hearing both positive and negative things about environmental protection/legislation.

\(^2\) David Gushee, interview by author, March 15, 2016. Text in parentheses are author’s for clarity.

\(^3\) Ibid.
of evangelical organizations focused on environmental stewardship over the past decade appears to support their contention. The matter is complicated by the fact that there is no central repository for local efforts, and the fact that evangelicals do not hew to a one-church authority, so there is no real way to measure growth over time except by qualitative data. Several organizations that offer case studies in how the creation care ethic is spreading at a grassroots level are explored below.4

Churches

A case in point is the Vineyard Boise Church, which inhabits a place that Pastor Tri Robinson calls the "radical middle," which he believes is "distinctive" because it is based upon the belief that, "we are participating now with God in the condition of the world. There's no waiting for Heaven or the hereafter, although there's a strong belief in salvation."5 Vineyard Boise is probably the most famous “green church” in the nation, although Robinson has always considered himself conservative.6 After writing the book Saving God's Green Earth: Rediscovering the Church's Responsibility to Environmental Stewardship, in 2006, Robinson said he was contacted by other evangelical leaders in-

---

4 Not included in the case studies is the interfaith group GreenFaith. Although GreenFaith was referenced by many evangelicals interviewed for this thesis as an organization active in assisting houses of worship to grow their creation care activities, only one of GreenFaith’s seventy-six members is an evangelical institution, according to the organization’s leadership. GreenFaith offers a two-year environmental leadership program for all houses of worship, including provision of creation care resources, one-on-one coaching, support and networking opportunities to help congregations with successful environmental programming.

5 Tri Robinson, telephone interview by author, October 17, 2012. Robinson postulates that Vineyard is neither Pentecostal nor Evangelical, although the belief system he lays out fits readily within an evangelical framework.

6 The church’s fame was in large part due to Robinson’s book Saving God's Green Earth: Rediscovering the Church's Responsibility to Environmental Stewardship, and the subsequent media interest in him.
olved in climate care. "I thought I was the only one who cared. But, we started having gatherings of evangelical leaders from all over who would come to Boise" to talk about what they could do to further the stewardship conversation.⁷ "I was on forty-three talk shows around 2007, and got huge pushback from conservative talk show guys" who did not understand the connection between the environment and more traditional concerns such as right to life.⁸ However, Robinson says the connection is clear, at least to him and his congregation, especially the younger people: “eighty percent of infant mortality in the developing world is water related. The environment is driving desperation… whether it’s food, shelter or human trafficking. There are a hundred facts like that. If you care about life, human or otherwise, it's connected to the environment. But it's a hard sell..." to the older, entrenched conservative side.⁹ In order to get “regular guys” to engage with creation care, “you're going to have to do three things: show me it is biblical and right, show me why it is going to be good for my church, and connect it to the kingdom of God.”¹⁰ Hayhoe, who regularly navigates between evangelical and secular audiences, echoes his sentiment, “Until we connect all those (scientific) facts to our hearts, we lack the motivation to act.”¹¹

---

⁷ Tri Robinson, telephone interview by author, October 17, 2012.

⁸ Ibid. Glen Beck was specifically mentioned by Robinson as one of the “talk show guys.”

⁹ Ibid.


Robinson’s postmillennial outlook is on display every day in his community of believers. Many of the church’s congregants work in the church’s garden, which is the largest in the Boise area, and which supplies more than thirty thousand pounds of organic produce (and chickens) to the needy. The church also puts a major emphasis on recycling and reusing as part of a sustainable lifestyle, and pushes families to get out into the forest surrounding the church’s property so they can learn to appreciate the beauty of creation and pass that love down through the generations. Congregants also volunteer with the United States Forest Service and other agencies, clearing and grooming trails and cleaning up parks.

In 2012, Robinson and his wife retired from their senior pastor positions at Vineyard Boise to begin a new international ministry, i-61 Ministries, based within the local church for compassion and mercy. The move expanded the creation care ethic exponentially; i-61 Ministries serves Vineyard Boise as a missions training and outreach center, networking eighty-five compassion mission ministries within the Vineyard USA. It offers various types of training programs in “seven areas of global crisis,” including environmental decline, and provides classroom and in-field training experience for evangelicals so that they will go back to their churches “on fire” to make a difference in their


community. “The ministry of i-61 has been a work in progress for as long as I have been in full time ministry,” Robinson has said, and really got launched after the publication of *Saving God’s Green Earth*, which “called Christians to environmental stewardship within the evangelical church. The book opened up conversations around the globe with people who deeply cared about extreme poverty and the connection with environmental issues…” The i-61 churches are those that understand the biblical responsibility for creation care, embrace the principles of environmental stewardship and work towards transforming their local church facilities into energy efficient structures. They are also known in their communities for their promotions of clean and healthy environments.

Another case study is the Northland megachurch headed by Joel Hunter. With a congregation of twenty thousand worshipping at three sites in Central Florida and at more than one thousand sites worldwide via interactive webcasts and social media, it is in the top twenty largest Protestant churches in the nation, and the largest church in Orlando. In addition to being a signatory on the ECI, Hunter hosted a television advertisement on behalf of creation care in 2006, and was invited to symposia on creation care at Windsor Castle in 2006 and 2008. Northland’s website states that as a pastor, he is helping the

---


19 Youtube, accessed August 20, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeFZx3nD8GY.
church be active outside its walls in various kinds of compassion issues, believing “pro-life” issues include not only protection of the vulnerable within the womb but continuing the protection of the vulnerable outside the womb — including becoming an internationally known advocate for protecting God’s creation for the sake of victims of pollution-caused climate change.\(^{20}\)

Hunter’s initiation into creation care came when he was asked to be a signatory on the ECI. “I was so taken aback by how I could have missed this as a significant issue,” said Hunter, that “I started reading book after book on climate change.”\(^ {21}\) A large part of Hunter’s transition had a basis in how he first became fully devoted to Christ, which occurred after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.\(^ {22}\)

I realized that this couldn't just be a political effort, but had to be a deeply moral and spiritual one that concentrates on the segment of our population that is vulnerable because that's who Jesus came for. That's the whole idea of the Gospel. Helping those who couldn't help themselves. We need God's help. For me, it was a natural transition from the civil rights movement where you care for a population that cannot or does not have the voice or power to speak for itself or defend itself, into the issues that affect vulnerable populations like climate change does. Climate is one of the chief issues (of our time); the ones that are most hurt are the ones that do not have the means to insulate themselves from the effects of climate change.\(^ {23}\)

Hunter introduced his substantial congregation to the idea of creation care through Scripture. “It was real simple for me and basic wherein God puts man in the garden of


\(^{21}\) Joel Hunter, telephone interview with author, August 31, 2016.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) Ibid. Language in parentheses is author’s.
Eden to cultivate and keep it. That is our first assignment from God…and there’s no expiration date, that’s still our mandate.” Echoing Cizik’s moment of conversion, Hunter reaches back to the words “avad” (to serve) and “shamar,” (to protect). The human mandate for the planet is “to bring out all its potential and ensure that pollution does not overtake it. There was no argument from my congregation. There are not a whole lot of people who want to damage the earth.” Hunter and his congregation set about putting words into action, including “energy audits on how we use resources in our congregation, how we deal with waste, land use, and six or seven different areas as markers for lowering our carbon footprint to make us better stewards of creation, all before EPA introduced the Energy Star stuff.”

Unlike some evangelical organizations, Northland Church highlights its relationship with secular environmental organizations, even those considered very liberal and that are frequently shunned or kept in the shadows due to their political activities, like the Sierra Club, WorldWildlife.org (formerly the World Wildlife Fund), and ecoAmerica. The Sierra Club’s first national report on environmental engagement of faith communities, *Faith in Action: Communities of Faith Bring Hope for the Planet*, features Northland Church as a leader in the state of Florida in crafting creative and promising solutions to

---

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Sierra Club and [WorldWildlife.org](http://www.worldwildlife.org) are traditional conservation and preservation organizations that have historically been viewed as part of the “liberal agenda” by conservatives. A newer organization, ecoAmerica works to build leadership on climate issues by working with American institutions at all levels to “build broad strong public support and political will for climate action.” ecoAmerica website, accessed January 16, 2017, [https://ecoamerica.org/partner/](https://ecoamerica.org/partner/).
environmental challenges. Likewise, Northland’s website includes a “How to Get Involved in Creation Care” page that links to other religious, governmental, scientific and secular organizations focused on environmental issues.

While Hunter believes there will “always be the Cal Beisner contingent who polarize issues” around environmental topics, he believes they are becoming marginalized as creation care becomes more mainstreamed. Most significantly, younger evangelicals are drawn to the idea of creation care, which may result in larger church membership: “For every one of the climate change doubters, we had a half dozen or dozen young people say, ‘you mean you care about that? Because we do too. This is the first relevant thing I’ve heard the church talk about.’”

One of the most prominent examples of evangelical engagement on climate issues within a specific denomination is the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA). CRCNA’s Climate Witness Project (CWP), a two-phase initiative begun in 2015, invited congregations to engage in creation care efforts at the local level by bringing attention to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) held in Paris of that year, the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21).

---


30 Joel Hunter, telephone interview by author, August 31, 2016.

31 Galen Carey email with author, August 19, 2016. Carey is the NAE vice president of government relations.

32 The Paris Climate Conference is officially known as the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations body which is responsible for climate and based in Bonn, Germany.
was to achieve a legally binding, universal agreement on climate change by all of the
world’s nations, which offered an opportunity for congregations that have been looking
for ways to engage in the issues of creation care and climate change more deeply. The
CWP is designed to help churches engage in the COP21 process through education, em-
powerment, and advocacy, and represents a significant organizational effort on the part of
the CRCNA’s office of social justice. COP21 is believed to be important to all churches
by challenging them to speak out, especially on behalf of the poor who live in countries
where climate change is already causing disruption.

The CWP was born out of Synod 2012 of the CRCNA, which affirmed the reality
of human-caused climate change and asked the members and congregations of the de-
nomination to work to end the harm caused by a changing climate. The document
adopted a historic report on creation care and climate change that challenged the church
to increased action to address the damage caused by climate change by reducing energy
use and advocating for effective public policies. Because of the strong biblical mandate
to care for creation, and the recommendations of Synod 2012, CWP as part of its first

33 Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, quoted on CRCNA website, accessed August 13, 2016, https://www.crc-

www.crcna.org/news-and-views/crc-launches-climate-witness-project. CRCNA’s office of social justice
will hire ten part-time, short-term organizers in selected areas of the United States and Canada, who will
have the job of connecting with and providing resources to CRCNA congregations.

project-christian-reformed-church-north-america.

ters/climate-witness-project-phase-two

37 Ibid. For full text, see CRCNA Synod 2012, Creation Stewardship Task Force, 287-593, ac-

136
phase sent a delegation of four people to COP21 for two purposes: to be able to report to
denomination members on the results of the meeting, and to witness to others at the event
that climate change, though it is also a scientific and policy issue, is fundamentally a reli-
gious and moral one.\footnote{Network.crcna.org website, accessed August 13, 2016, http://network.crcna.org/creation-matters/climate-witness-project-phase-two.} In addition, more than two hundred partners were recruited by
CWP to provide leadership in thirty-five congregations, and another thirteen members
were recruited to write op-eds for news outlets (including The Huffington Post, Des
Moines Register, Newark Star Ledger, Grand Rapids Press, Holland Sentinel, Hamilton
Spectator, Albuquerque Journal), or CRCNA blogs about the importance of the Paris
Agreement.\footnote{CRCNA Climate Witness website, accessed August 13, 2016, http://network.crcna.org/creation-matters/climate-witness-project-phase-two.} CWP also arranged for fifteen visits to Congressional members and mem-

Phase two of the CWP started on March 1, 2016, and will be completed by June
30, 2017. Many of the regional organizers from phase one are continuing, and may ex-
pand into new regions. The CWP will work with at least seventy churches in order to
continue educating congregations about climate change, continue to write and publish op-
eds, and arrange Congressional and Parliamentary visits.\footnote{Rich Killmer, telephone interview by author, August 22, 2016.} Rev. Rich Killmer, coordinator
of the CWP, says that there are three emphases that are currently the focus of activity:

\begin{itemize}
\item The language of the Paris Agreement was negotiated by repre-
sentatives of 195 countries at COP21. The Agreement’s central aim is to strengthen the global response to
the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below two degrees Cel-
sius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5
degrees Celsius.
\item [40] Rich Killmer, telephone interview by author, August 22, 2016.
\end{itemize}
Congressional advocacy; providing educational resources, such as sharing information from international meetings like COP21; and energy stewardship.\footnote{Rich Killmer, telephone interview by author, August 22, 2016.} This is new territory for CRCNA, and Killmer says that “It’s hard slugging…we’re doing it congregation by congregation. I’ve been told ‘no’ a lot, but we’ve had some success,” including visits to Congressional members that “went pretty well.”\footnote{Ibid.} Part of CWP’s goal is to make congregations aware of EPA’s Energy Star certification opportunity for houses of worship. “Part of the issue is that people are not aware of the certification, which is why you need something like CRCNA organizing around it.”\footnote{Ibid.} Killmer said the hope is that CRCNA “will have seventy congregations that are Energy Star certified by June 2017,” which means “they can tell their Congressional members that they think EPA certification is a good thing.”\footnote{Ibid.} Two CRCNA congregations now have a score of more than seventy-five on EPA’s Energy Star online Portfolio Manager, which means they can apply for certification. “Once they get it, they’ll be the first churches in the CRCNA to do so, and another congregation in Grand Rapids will probably be doing the same.”\footnote{Ibid.} This type of success is instrumental in moving creation care forward, as other congregations become enabled to take steps to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions by making their buildings more energy efficient and reducing their use of energy produced by the burning of fossil fuels.
Many congregations begin their work in energy stewardship for simple cost-saving reasons, like replacing traditional light bulbs with LEDs, installing light sensors in bathrooms, and installing programmable thermostats. A CRCNA representative who belongs to a New Mexico congregation and was one of the individuals recruited to write an op-ed, said, “I think that a really interesting aspect of this that I've avoided the topic of global warming,” when talking with people about creation care.47 “People are more interested in saving money. For example, at the CRCNA in Zuni, the pastor is fairly conservative and Republican, and I'm getting my foot in the door. So addressing energy savings is a good way to do that. The other aspects come later.”48

State

The mission of Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) is to be faithful stewards of creation by responding to global warming through the promotion of energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy.49 The movement consists of a growing number of independent state-wide inter-religious organizations, including several that are evangelical, that share a common ancestry and a common commitment to foster environmental responsibility in the area of energy use by reaching out to faith communities and reli-

---

47 CRCNA representative (anonymous), telephone interview by author, September 8, 2016.
48 Ibid.
49 Interfaith Power and Light website, accessed August 20, 2016, http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/. The mission statement reads: “As a religious response to climate change, the Interfaith Power and Light movement seeks to conserve nonrenewable energy sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping religious communities in their respective states become better stewards of creation through the use of green energy and energy efficient practices.” The Regeneration Project (http://theregenerationproject.org/), IPL’s parent organization, is committing all of its current resources for the next few years to supporting IPL with the belief that through grassroots outreach, interfaith collaboration, and responsible action based on shared values, people of faith can lead society toward a new relationship with the earth.
gious institutions throughout each state. According to IPL president Rev. Sally Bingham, the organization comprised fourteen congregations in California in 2001; today, it is in forty states and includes about eighteen thousand congregations. IPL originated in 1997, when Rev. Bingham and Steve MacAusland founded Episcopal Power and Light (EPL) in California under the auspices of The Regeneration Project (TRP), an inter-religious organization dedicated to deepening the connections between ecology and faith. Conceived as a pilot program to help Episcopal churches in California become more energy efficient through the adoption of green energy sources, the EPL was so successful that it expanded its mandate to include denominations in other states, which evolved into the IPL movement.

In states with deregulated electric industries, IPLs help individuals and congregations band together to purchase energy from green energy suppliers instead of mainstream utility companies. In addition to facilitating the switch to clean and renewable energy sources, IPLs provide religious communities with resources about energy conservation strategies such as energy audits, energy efficient lighting, solar power, and building renovations, and also partner with secular environmental institutions. Collectively, they have begun a national movement to help Americans transition away from dependency on

---


52 In 2000, TRP collaborated with the California Council of Churches to form California Interfaith Power and Light.

53 Ibid. The EPL signed up sixty Episcopal churches to purchase clean and renewable energy.

fossil fuel with the goal of helping to save God’s creation from the peril of global climate change.55

The EPA, in part, has helped to boost the ability of IPLs nationwide through the Energy Star for Congregations program. Houses of worship involved in the program could potentially cut energy costs by up to thirty percent by investing strategically in efficient equipment, facility upgrades and maintenance, with which the EPA will assist.56 As additional incentive, the EPA states that if more than three hundred thousand places of worship across the United States reduced energy usage by ten percent, they would save nearly two hundred million dollars, and prevent more than two million tons of greenhouse gas emissions, which is the equivalent of removing four hundred thousand cars from the road.57

Reducing energy use and monitoring the health of a local stream by counting its tiny creatures are ways in which two CRCNA congregations are seeking to care for God’s creation.58 In Oak Forest, Illinois, Hope Christian Reformed Church is working toward becoming the first church in the denomination to earn an Energy Star rating for its efforts to save electricity, gas, and water. “We see caring for creation as a moral, faith-based issue and have been doing this in a tangible way by saving energy costs in our church,” ac-

55 Ibid.
cording to Corenna Roozeboom, chair of the creation care committee at Hope.⁵⁹ In Grandville, Michigan, Trinity Christian Reformed Church has been testing the water quality of the stream that runs along its property for nine years, and the congregation is now expanding its work with the help of a grant from the state.⁶⁰

The North Carolina IPL (NC IPL) is part of the North Carolina Council of Churches, and one of the most active IPLs in the nation. A representative of the NC IPL explains that there is a rekindled evangelicalism in the state, resulting in growth within the council. “It’s about Scripture and holding people accountable. Our role is to remind progressive Christians that we have the tenets and we're called to follow them. Power and light refer to faith in God as well as decreasing and changing energy use. It's really about climate justice.”⁶¹ The representative, who has an advanced degree in Divinity, reiterates the perspective that when the word “evangelical” is spoken, the automatic political default is “conservative Republican,” and “that’s not necessarily true. I work alongside a Republican majority in our state, and the reality is when I go in and help educate and train faith leaders, clergy, congregations…I literally have to train them on how to talk (to evangelicals)...even though everyone shares the same Scriptures.”⁶² Likewise, the representative has found a need to “go back to Scripture, because policy wasn’t working” when discussing environmental issues with evangelical elected leaders; “…and it’s a con-

---

⁵⁹ Ibid.


⁶¹ Author phone interview with NC IPL representative, August 22, 2016.

⁶² Ibid. Language in parentheses is author’s.
stant dance of learning to meet people where they’re at…you can’t just go in quoting Scripture because someone’s a Republican,” because sometimes “it’s not the biblical passage but the value of the interpretation” that matters.63

The representative has observed that the faith community has an increasingly critical role to play in policy work, including whether and how they collaborate with secular partners such as the Sierra Club or Environmental Defense Fund. “Environmentalists can often sound like, ‘if you don't get it you’re an idiot.’” However, the representative says that:

Ninety percent of North Carolina’s elected officials just don’t have a background or training in environmental issues, and that wasn’t what they were elected for… So we totally pulled back from our factsheets. We wanted to be seen as truth seekers and be a trusted partner with elected officials doing the work of the people.64

To that end, the NC IPL visits state representatives and officials subsequent to environmental organizations’ visits, offering assistance with deciphering complex climate data and asking whether there are questions that need answering.65

The IPL partners with secular environmental organizations because from an organizational standpoint they have resources and funding, according to the representative. “They recognize they’re not winning policy in certain states and look for nontraditional partners like IPLs. We give them validity and a different voice,” but ask them to be “si-

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
lent partners” to offset any perception of the IPL being affiliated with liberal environmental organizations. “They’re okay with it because the end result is what they want.”

Many environmental organizations clearly understand the nuances necessary to communicate the environmental message to conservative Christians, and are willing to invest in making it happen; one such organization provided an IPL and EEN with funding to “power map” the state legislature, including determining the religion of each member and where they attend church, among other data, to better understand the contextual nuances of communicating with them. Echoing the lobbyist working with evangelical groups, the NC IPL representative adds “if you think the majority of Congress are climate deniers, you are wrong. They need political cover. The environmental community has backed them into a corner, and they’ll be the first to tell you. It’s undoing that, that we need to do.”

In the West, the Colorado IPL (CO IPL) has provided leadership and support for people of faith in in responding to climate change and stewardship for more than ten years, including public policy information and action alerts to its members. The organization has collaborated with the Governor’s Energy Office in developing a training program focused on seniors to reduce energy use and costs in their homes; it has offered climate-oriented educational programs and workshops that have attracted hundreds of participants.

---

66 Ibid.
67 Ibid. Language in parentheses is author’s.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
throughout Colorado to learn about how climate change impacts life; it maintains a lending library of videos, books and magazines that are available to member congregations at no cost; and it has an expansive communications and outreach capability which includes social media, monthly e-newsletters, and participation in environmentally-oriented community events, such as Earth Day fairs, to reach out to new people.\(^{70}\)

CO IPL has also provided expert testimony before local, regional, and Federal bodies regarding legislation, policies, rules, and regulations that affect the human relationship with the planet, and has provided expert opinions to local and regional media outlets.\(^{71}\) Successful collaborations include those that are inclusive of evangelical denominations and beliefs, including the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, Eco-Justice Ministries, the Colorado Council of Churches, Conservation Colorado, the Ethics and Ecological Economics Forum at Iliff Seminary, and the University of Denver.\(^{72}\) The Souls Going Green program gathers clergy on a quarterly basis to provide training, development, networking, fellowship, and pastoral care and support around issues of climate change and caring for creation; representatives of CO IPL also regularly preach in local churches, and teach in the classrooms of houses of worship throughout Colorado.\(^{73}\) CO IPL’s year-end missive states, “We believe that we are witnessing an outpouring of interest in environmental stewardship by congregations across the country….Our overarching goal is to


\(^{71}\) CO IPL email, November 22, 2016.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.

\(^{73}\) Ibid.
maintain and expand that interest so that it continues to make an impact on the environment.”

One of the most effective secular organizations that IPLs collaborate with at the state level is the Citizens’ Climate Lobby (CCL), a non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots advocacy organization focused on national policies to address climate change. Initiated in 2007 with one chapter in California, CCL now has nearly three hundred and forty chapters spread throughout every state, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. CCL’s specific mission is to generate the political will necessary for passage of the Carbon Fee and Dividend proposal, for which the organization trains and supports volunteers to engage elected officials, the media and the public. The proposal itself was created by CCL to account for the costs of burning fossil fuels, and CCL claims that if passed, within twenty years greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced to fifty-two percent below 1990 levels while growing the economy. CCL holds annual Lobby Days in Washington, D.C., wherein climate advocates lobby key congressional committees and leaders, home state members of Congress, and non-governmental organizations headquartered in DC. The Lobby Days rely heavily on training volunteers to go to Capitol Hill, and speakers

---

74 Ibid.


76 Ibid.


from organizations like EEN and the IPLs are part of the education process, especially with regard to environmental justice issues and the moral component of creation care for certain members of Congress.79 “There are a thousand CCL people on the Hill meeting with almost every member of Congress…we’ve been told by staffers that they’ve hardly ever seen anything like this because we’re breaking the mold,” according to CCL regional coordinator Brett Cease.80 CCL's strategy in the last two years has been about growth:

As we are growing we are getting very active chapters, maybe ten to twenty people a month at chapter meetings, and that’s when you find critical mass, to have someone specifically in a district to nurture key endorsements. We meet with the key endorsers district by district and use their endorsement to leverage conversations with members of Congress.”81

The CCL in Texas is currently working with Hayhoe in an effort to duplicate a successful endeavor in Florida wherein a bipartisan caucus on climate change was developed, based upon collaborations fostered between local faith leaders, churches and businesses.82 “What we’re doing in Texas is a similar approach, but we’re not as far along as Florida. Our niche is trying to focus on Congress and advocating bipartisan solutions.”83

Cease also speaks about creating a safe space for conservative members to admit

---

79 Brett Cease, telephone interview by author, August 26, 2016. Cease’s territory includes Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid. The caucus was officially launched in the Florida legislature in March 2016.

83 Ibid.
believing in climate science. “We have to meet them with respect, admiration and gratitude,” he says. For example:

They say ‘I get it, I know why you’re here. I need someone to make the moral, ethical case for climate legislation. I won’t be any good to you if I’m voted out in eight months’…that’s what CCL tries to engage…this isn’t a political issue. As soon as we can create space for both sides to de-politicize and realize that this is about science and common interest, the sooner we’ll be able to act on it.”

Cease says that CCL has reason to believe that carbon pricing legislation will be introduced some time in 2017, based on what the organization has heard from Congressional members.

EEN is also active at the state level. In April, 2016, nearly fifty thousand pro-life Christians in Texas called for Republican Governor Greg Abbott to create a plan for the state to achieve one hundred percent clean electricity by 2030, as part of the EEN’s Pro-Life Clean Energy Campaign. “Texas is a top generator of wind energy, but the state’s clean energy potential is so much greater. Texas could lead the nation and become America’s clean energy powerhouse,” said Rev. Hescox. “Cleaning up our air will protect the unborn from harmful pollution and make it easier to breathe for the…children in Texas who have asthma. It’s the right thing to do.” Part of the state-level lobbying effort embraced the libertarian sensibility that so many evangelicals are attracted to. The campaign for clean energy would, in effect:

Defend our freedom to create our own electricity from wind & sunshine, without

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
fees championed by monopolistic utilities to make it unaffordable and out of reach; free our communities from regulations that prevent us from joining together to create our own clean electricity and sell what we don’t need to others; and free businesses from such regulations so that they, too, can create and sell clean electricity.”

The campaign began in six states including: Texas, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, and also supported near-term policy initiatives such as net metering policies, renewable electricity standards, and tax credits to encourage homeowners and businesses to purchase solar panels and other clean energy systems.

In Pennsylvania, EEN successfully lobbied Governor Tom Wolf to veto fiscal code legislation, due to the fact that the evangelical group was “deeply concerned for the impacts HB 1327 would have on our children’s health” because it would “slow down Pennsylvania’s transition to a clean energy future for our children.” A key part of EEN’s argument was the contention that the legislation would also remove twelve million dollars from energy efficiency programs contained in the Alternative Energy Investment Act to provide natural gas connection grants, and make it easier to drill near schools, playgrounds, and public water supplies.

Christians for the Mountains (CTFM) is another organization that has made significant progress at both the state and Federal levels, specifically in preventing mountain-top removal coal mining. CFTM describes itself as a “a network of persons advocating

87 Ibid.


90 Ibid.
that Christians and their churches recognize their God-given responsibility to live compatibly, sustainably, and gratefully joyous upon this God’s earth,” with “the central Appalachian region” as its geographical focus.\footnote{91 Christians for the Mountains webpage, accessed January 5, 2017, http://www.christiansforthemountains.org/site/Topics/About/ourMission.html.} CTFM has hired a representative from the southeastern region of the Christian Coalition “to talk to conservatives about the environment in a way they understand. Environmentalists on the left didn’t understand why the right wasn’t listening.”\footnote{92 Christian Coalition representative, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2016. Interviewee requested anonymity.} The Christian Coalition is a political organization, made up of pro-family Americans who “care deeply about ensuring that government serves to strengthen and preserve, rather than threaten, our families and our values….We work continuously to identify, educate and mobilize Christians for effective political action.”\footnote{93 Christian Coalition website, accessed March 8, 2017, http://www.cc.org/about_us.} Using his combined experience as a lobbyist and his Southern Baptist faith, the representative’s key focus was and is on renewable energy. In late 2016, working closely with former Vice President Al Gore, Jr., the representative launched a successful grassroots effort to defeat the utilities-sponsored Amendment 1 in Florida, which would have limited rooftop solar expansion.\footnote{94 Florida Amendment 1 — Solar Energy Subsidies and Personal Solar Use, accessed January 5, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/elections/results/florida-ballot-measure-1-solarenergy-equipment-rights. According to the Christian Coalition representative, utility companies and other outside sources expended $45 million on the effort.} His methodology was simple: “We don’t have to make people agree about climate change, but we can agree that solar panels make sense.”\footnote{95 Christian Coalition representative, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2016.} In a larger context, he says the energy issue is about national security, which “leaves you talk-
ing about the economy, which trickles down to the family. The Christian Coalition, for example, is a family organization. We think energy policy is something every family must think about. There should be a way for them to lower their bills." The representative expressed optimism at the prospect of a Trump presidency, because he believes that:

The way the EPA will shift may work towards the methods that I’m working on. If you can get someone like me in there, without having climate change as part of the conversation, it could work. I think that’s what Trump is looking for — what’s a good deal, good for the country, incentivize. Let each state find a way to meet renewable standards, like hog waste in North Carolina, solar in the south, wind in the midwest.97

The Christian Coalition has participated with IPLs, but only in a small way, because “they have their own space. The SBC (which interacts with the Christian Coalition), is a large entity that needs its own care, and people who have been framed as liberal are sometimes a turnoff.”98 However, the representative believes the that the ERLC, the political wing of the SBC, may be more open to the idea of creation care than it has been in the past if it is framed outside of the political context of climate change. “I see this as an issue that the SBC will embrace.”99

Community

As at the congregational and state levels, the number of evangelical organizations involved in community environmental stewardship activities has blossomed in the twenty-first century. This is due, in large part, to an evolving belief that increasingly views

---

96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
protection of the natural world as a moral and ethical issue, not a political one. At the same time, these organizations are clear in defining their mission as one that does not “worship nature,” but worships alongside of it, lovingly and protectively because it is part of God’s creation. DeWitt has said that the idea of “environmentalism” is not traditionally well received in evangelical circles because it conjures up the idea that the environment has primary importance, rather than the eco-justice idea that Christians are more comfortable with, i.e., that the community and the environment must be looked at together.100 “The evangelical approach is, these people have to be transformed. They have to be taught the value of creation.”101 Once people form a personal connection to the issue, religion can be a strong motivator, says Cybelle Shattuck, a University of Michigan researcher who has been looking at the factors that influence faith-based environmental action at the community level. Interviewees have told her “their faith gives them the ability to try something even if they don't know they can do it.”102

Restoring Eden, which formed in the early nineties, has a stated mission to “make hearts bigger, hands dirtier, and voices stronger by rediscovering the biblical call to love, serve, and protect God's creation.”103 Founder Peter Illyn, an evangelical pastor from the Pacific Northwest, personifies the transformation into a passionate evangelical environmental activist. Illyn has said that he “went into the mountains a minister, but I came out

101 Ibid.
an environmental activist," after a four-month, thousand-mile llama trek up the spine of the Cascade Mountains in the late eighties where he experienced first hand the degradation occurring due to logging and deforestation.\textsuperscript{104} Upon return, he started a wilderness ministry, taking families and small groups into the wilderness areas surrounding the Cascade volcanoes. Around the same time, the Pacific Northwest spotted owl controversy had reached a fevered pitch in the United States, with environmentalists pitted against logging interests and local jobs. Illyn, however, believed the need to protect species was a wise choice, based on the idea that the earth is the “only place in the known universe that supports life, and that the fruitfulness of the earth is a function of the diversity, interconnectedness and cycling of the web of life.”\textsuperscript{105} Further, even at this early stage in creation care’s history, Illyn had already made the leap between environmental stewardship and right-to-life: "how can we be pro-life and yet cavalier with the very systems that create life? If we love the Creator, we must take care of creation."\textsuperscript{106}

Reflecting the burgeoning interest in creation care, the organization has grown exponentially since its inception; it is now a national ministry that works with a variety of different organizations and Christian denominations, including more than twenty universities. At the community level, Restoring Eden has been involved in dozens of activities in support of creation care. One of the most recent is the Appalachian Community Health

\textsuperscript{104} Peter Illyn, quoted on Restoring Eden website, accessed August 25, 2016, \url{http://restoringeden.org/about/history}. Illyn’s llama journey began in the late eighties.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid. Illyn says he finds support in Psalm 104:24, "In wisdom you made them all, the earth is filled with all of your creatures."
Research Project, in which student volunteers knocked on fourteen thousand doors and gathered over two thousand health surveys during a spring break trip to mountaintop removal coal mining communities of Appalachia. The purpose of the survey was to obtain research data on the health impacts of coal mining in these poverty-stricken communities. With the data collected through the project, researchers at West Virginia University have published two studies in peer-reviewed journals showing that cancer and disease rates are twice as high in mountaintop removal coal mining communities compared to non-coal mining communities.

A Rocha, an international organization comprised of evangelical and other Christian conservation organizations, has been working with communities around the world since its inception in 1983, and is one of the only faith-based entities in the International Union for Conservation of Nature. In the United States, as in twenty other countries, the organization’s mission is to inspire and equip Christians to know and love their local habitats through practical, community-focused conservation. A Rocha is building a network of hands-on conservation projects in communities across the nation, guided by local context, local needs and local leadership; in some areas the focus is on developing

---


organic gardens and farms, in other areas, watershed protection and habitat restoration are the focus.\textsuperscript{111} Each project includes research, education and hands-on opportunities for people to get involved in environmental conservation, and the organization works with churches, schools, neighborhood groups and individuals to provide three primary services: community-based conservation, environmental education and scientific research.

In Nashville, A Rocha is building an environmental community of songwriters, and creating opportunities for them to learn about ecological issues and come together for songwriting retreats. The first volume of “From Smallest Seed — the A Rocha Project,” an album of songs written around the theme of creation care, was released in 2014.\textsuperscript{112} Also in Nashville, A Rocha has developed the Backyard Biodiversity Project, which connects Nashville residents to the outside world, allowing them to learn with and work with others to enhance the biodiversity of the urban and suburban places they live.\textsuperscript{113}

In Washington state, A Rocha is partnering with local conservation organizations, agencies, churches and community groups to learn about watersheds, strengthen the local food system, protect habitat and species. The organization is also monitoring wildlife populations, assessing water quality, restoring streams and wetlands, and teaching residents about spawning salmon swimming through their backyards through the Fishtrap and Bertrand Creek Community Project.\textsuperscript{114} Similar work is being done in central Oregon.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
where A Rocha facilitates community outings to get people outdoors, specifically teaching them about the value of watersheds, stream ecology, native and invasive plants and biblical stewardship. The outings also provide opportunities for hands-on restoration work with Trout Unlimited and other organizations — such as the Mountaineers Foundation, which provides A Rocha with funding. The organization also conducts several ecological studies throughout northwest Washington. One study involved constructing and monitoring nest boxes for American kestrels to help control pest predation of local blueberry crops; another studied the composition, diversity and history of an old-growth forest remnant in Berthusen Park.115

Texas hill country is home to the seven-thousand acre Big Springs Ranch for Children, home to at-risk and orphaned youth. The property is also home to two endangered bird species, and one of the largest underground caverns in the state.116 A Rocha received an invitation from the ranch to help with the conservation and study of the property, and also received two grants to fund work on watershed preservation and restoration at Big Springs.117 The grants were the result of a collaboration between Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, Aquifer Group, and Big Springs. A Rocha also plans to use the grants to develop outdoor education programs for children.

115 Ibid.

116 The endangered species referenced are the Black-capped Vireo and the Golden-cheeked Warbler.

After gaining the support of Wheaton College’s administration, A Rocha was given a one-third parcel of land in the center of campus for a community garden. One of the goals in building the garden was to raise awareness on campus of local environmental concerns, and provide a way for students to actively participate in the work of conservation in the form of sustainable agriculture.\textsuperscript{118} Wheaton’s support of the garden is indicative of a growing stewardship orientation at evangelical institutions of higher education. While grassroots activity at the church, state and community levels is burgeoning as discussed in this chapter, the increase in creation care activity at evangelical universities, colleges and seminaries illustrates the growing strength of the creation care movement at the institutional level, and indicates a trend in the direction of sustainability. The institutionalization of creation care will be examined in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
CHAPTER FIVE

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CREATION CARE
AT EVANGELICAL SEMINARIES AND UNIVERSITIES

The creation care ethic appears to be making inroads into evangelical seminaries and universities, and likely will have a multiplier effect within congregations and student bodies as environmental stewardship becomes more institutionalized. While comprehensive aggregate data for these efforts over the past several decades does not exist, there are a number of organizations that have recently begun to track stewardship activities at evangelical seminaries, universities and colleges, which will eventually prove useful for identifying trends through time. These are explored in more depth below.

Seminaries

A 2014 survey by the PRRI and the American Academy of Religion found that “most Americans who attend religious services at least once or twice a month hear little from their clergy leaders about the issue of climate change, with six-in-ten Americans saying their clergy leaders rarely (twenty-nine percent) or never (thirty-three percent) reference climate change.”¹ That may shift over the next decade, especially if the political hot potato of climate change becomes unbundled from creation care’s ethic of environmental stewardship, as many evangelical institutions are attempting to do. Quantitative data reporting on environmental stewardship efforts at evangelical seminaries, as reported through the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development (ICSD), the Seminary Stew-

ardship Alliance (SSA) and the Green Stewardship Initiative (GSI), indicate a slow but growing trend in the direction of creation care.

Seminaries influence the reach and impact of future faith leaders throughout congregations and communities, and the education of emerging clergy in creation care is critical to spreading the creation care message. The past few years have witnessed significant growth in the number and diversity of courses on faith and ecology at institutions training seminarians in North America. However, despite the rapid growth of such courses in religious education, the percentage of seminaries offering creation care-related courses remains relatively low (twenty-two percent) according to the ICSD’s 2015 Report on Faith and Ecology Courses in North American Seminaries. The report indicates that “activists have yet to succeed in catalyzing a collective global response commensurate with the challenge” of environmental stewardship, stemming in part from “the failure to engage those people with the greatest track record of inspiring behavior change: faith leaders, clergy and teachers.” Yet, the authors also indicate that “seminaries have embarked on a host of greening initiatives on campuses throughout North America,” in everything from

---


3 Ibid., 4. The ICSD examined 231 seminaries in the United States and Canada (out of a total of 252 surveyed) that are accredited Christian seminaries in North America, as listed by the Association of Theological Schools at http://www.ats.edu/. The 22% represent 58 seminaries out of the total of 252 seminaries surveyed. While the primary focus of the report is Christian seminaries, data from three Buddhist, nine Jewish, and two Muslim schools is also included.

4 Ibid.
campus infrastructure, food sourcing and recycling, to curriculum development. More than one hundred ninety faith and ecology courses are currently offered by fifty-eight seminaries and religious colleges in the United States and Canada. Ten of the fifty-eight are evangelical. According to the ICSD, with thousands of seminarians enrolled in courses related to faith and the environment, it appears that part of the next generation of religious leadership will be emerging "better equipped to teach on creation care and stewardship." For some seminaries, the commitment to creation care involves an entire degree program or concentration; for others, it leans more towards institutionalized sustainable practices on campus that are also shared with the surrounding community.

An organization whose mission is to increase the number of green seminaries with a particular emphasis on the evangelical tradition is Blessed Earth’s Seminary Stewardship Alliance (SSA), which currently has forty-one consortium members (all of which were included in the ICSD survey, including the ten evangelical institutions.) Although the alliance’s membership includes non-evangelical members, Blessed Earth’s founders chose a uniquely evangelical approach in developing the consortium, focusing on biblical

\[
\text{\textsuperscript{5}} \text{Ibid., 5.} \\
\text{\textsuperscript{6}} \text{Ibid.} \\
\text{\textsuperscript{7}} \text{Ibid., 15.} \\
\text{\textsuperscript{9}} \text{Seminary Stewardship Alliance website, accessed March 3, 2017, http://seminaryalliance.org/partner-schools/}. \\
\]
narratives and stories of personal renewal from their personal lives. The SSA initiative was announced in April 2012 at the Washington National Cathedral, and at that time included a consortium of twelve seminaries, five of which were evangelical, dedicated to reconnecting Christians with the biblical call to care for God’s creation. Two representatives from each of the seminaries convened at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, to discuss how to equip seminaries to build stewardship teams on their campuses that will be responsible for helping their individual seminary teach, preach, live and hold each other accountable for good stewardship practices.

The SSA has as its mission catalyzing sustainable practices in seminaries; advancing scholarship on creation care; and nourishing dialog within and among seminaries, including promoting respectful dialogue with other scientific, governmental, and academic institutions. The alliance is dedicated to reconnecting Christians with the biblical call to care for God’s creation:

Our goal is for member seminaries to teach, preach, live, inspire, and hold each other accountable for good stewardship practices. The Christian faith occupies a central role in our culture. Seminaries equip, train, and inspire the future leaders


11 Seminary Stewardship Alliance website, accessed October 1 2016, http://seminaryalliance.org/history/. The twelve founding schools that committed to this initiative represent a wide range of Christian thought, including several that are evangelical. Signatories of the SSA Covenant included presidents and deans of the following schools: Asbury Theological Seminary, Columbia Theological Seminary, Denver Seminary, Duke Divinity School, Fuller Theological Seminary, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, George Fox Evangelical Seminary (now Portland Seminary), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Luther Seminary, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Tabor Adelaide Seminary, and Wake Forest School of Divinity.

12 Ibid.
of the church, thereby having a powerful effect across denominations and throughout the world.\textsuperscript{13}

The organization assists with the development of environmental stewardship curricula and collaboration within, and among, seminaries, by providing sample syllabi; conducting conferences and workshops; providing seed grants for creation care work; dialoguing with scientific, governmental, and academic institutions; and providing other resources designed to equip seminary leaders to become leaders in the creation care movement.\textsuperscript{14} The SSA is frequently cited as a leader in the development of a creation care ethic at evangelical seminaries by persons interviewed for this thesis.

The interfaith Green Seminary Initiative (GSI) is another organization that focuses on the greening of seminaries in the United States. Of the organization’s fifty-five members, all of which were also included in the ICSD survey, eight are evangelical.\textsuperscript{15} The initiative was officially launched in November, 2007, at the annual American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature meeting, when six major figures in eco-theology, called for theological schools to take seriously their obligation to prepare religious leaders to meet the looming ecological crisis.\textsuperscript{16} They challenged seminaries and schools of divinity to infuse theological education with an earth ethic and to create physi-

\begin{itemize}
\item[Ibid.]\textsuperscript{13}
\item[Ibid. Accessed March 3, 2017.]\textsuperscript{14}
\item[Ibid., accessed October 13, 2016, http://www.greenseminaries.org/index.php/aboutus. The six were John Cobb, Cal Dewitt, Norman Habel, Sallie McFague, Larry Rasmussen and Rosemary Radford Ruether.]\textsuperscript{16}
\end{itemize}
cal and spiritual communities to support that ethic.\textsuperscript{17} GSI and SSA both maintain growing lists of resources that include nearly twenty years’ worth of scholarship and outreach efforts, as well as compendia of syllabi, geared toward individual ecclesial families, all of which approach environmental stewardship from an interfaith perspective.\textsuperscript{18}

GSI is co-hosted by the interfaith environmental group GreenFaith and evangelical partners Drew Theological School and George Fox Evangelical Seminary (now Portland Seminary); Southeastern Baptist Seminary formerly hosted, but recently decided to withdraw for financial reasons.\textsuperscript{19} With this partnership, and the institutional support provided by GreenFaith, GSI launched a new Seminary Environmental Certification Program in 2016. This designation allows schools to have a strategic, specific structure for integrating creation care into their missions and programs. The certification is a three-year process, and requires buy-in from each seminary’s board, faculty, administration, staff and students, in the development of a sustainable action plan across five areas: curriculum, liturgy/ritual, buildings and grounds, community life and public leadership.\textsuperscript{20} Drew Theological School has already achieved GSI certification. The seminary has a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified student center and

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. GSI’s syllabi compendia may be found here: \url{http://greenseminaries.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&catid=11&Itemid=120}. SSA’s may be found here: \url{http://seminaryalliance.org/creation-care-syllabi/}.

\textsuperscript{19} Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary representative, telephone interview by author, November 3, 2016. Interviewee requested anonymity.

\textsuperscript{20} \url{EpiscopalChurch.org}, accessed October 30, 2016, \url{http://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/article/general-seminary-announces-greenfaith-partnership}. In Fall 2016, the General Theological Seminary piloted a program that is modeled after GSI’s, including partnering with GSI and GreenFaith, which created a new environmental certification program specifically designed for Episcopalian seminaries and theological schools.
dormitory, a no-pesticides/herbicides integrated pest policy, green cleaning supplies, LED lighting and Energy Star machines and appliances, system-wide recycling and food composting, a community garden and a very engaged student and faculty body. Most notably, Drew has extensive course curricula that is inclusive of creation care, with at least fifty percent of its professors incorporating relevant aspects of creation care into course offerings.

According to a recent survey of seventeen theological schools conducted by GSI, the size of enrollment seems to play no particular role in the success of creation-care efforts at seminaries, although initiatives at embedded schools (those affiliated with larger institutions) seem to be the most successful. An interesting data point is that, when measured by full time student enrollment data, five of the ten largest evangelical seminaries in the United States are SSA and/or GSI members, and have also included creation care as part of their curricula and experiential learning. This has the potential to impact hundreds, if not thousands, of students over time.

Drew also has a no “mammal flesh” food covenant in keeping with a low carbon footprint, a community garden, chapel services focused specifically on creation care, compostable plates and utensils (no bottles or cans are served), and fair trade coffee.


The five are Fuller (2,340 full time equivalent students), Asbury (1,189 FTE), Southeastern Baptist (1,067 FTE), Gordon Conwell (972 FTE) and New Orleans Baptist (815 FTE), according to full time equivalent student enrollment data from the *Association of Theological Schools 2015-2016 Annual Data Tables*, accessed October 8, 2016, [http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/institutional-data/annual-data-tables/2015-2016-annual-data-tables.pdf](http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/institutional-data/annual-data-tables/2015-2016-annual-data-tables.pdf). Author’s note: FTE data does not include the number of students that actually graduate and move into positions within churches, which would potentially provide more accurate representation of whether creation care efforts make it into the broader religious community.
Fuller Theological Seminary, the largest evangelical seminary in the United States, is one of the founders of the Blessed Earth Project, which was the progenitor of the SSA, and is also an active participant in the GSI. Fuller offers six courses that integrate ecological concepts into religious teaching, according to the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development, including “Creation Care and the Sabbath Economics,” which is offered under the emphasis areas of Christian Ethics and Just Peacemaking.” Specifically, this course studies the theological and ethical grounds and directives of creation care and Sabbath economics that inform personal and corporate responsibility as the stewards of God’s creation. Study includes an analysis of the detrimental impact of global capitalism on the ecology, and an exploration of appropriate spiritual formation, communal practices, and public policy proposals of creation care and the Sabbath economics in local, national, and global contexts. A course will be added for the Spring 2017 semester, “Jesus the Church and Violence,” which focuses in part on theological/ ecological violence. The instructors of the eco-religious courses at Fuller make an effort to integrate ecological teachings into their other classes as “one of the major issues of our

25 Chelsea Vicari, “What are America’s Largest Seminaries?,” *Juicy Ecumenism*, accessed October 1, 2016, [https://juicyecumenism.com/2016/08/01/americas-largest-seminaries/](https://juicyecumenism.com/2016/08/01/americas-largest-seminaries/). At the time of writing, membership in the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) includes 110 schools that are evangelical, out of a total of 270 (according to an online interview by Dan Aleshire, ATS, with Leith Anderson, National Association of Evangelicals, accessed October 1, 2016, [http://nae.net/aleshirepodcast/](http://nae.net/aleshirepodcast/)).


28 Ibid.
times,” according to Dr. Hak Joon Lee, Professor of Theology and Ethics. Dr. Richard Mouw, former President and Professor of Faith and Public Life at Fuller, notes that the integration of ecology in religious learning is not a matter of "adding courses, but of integrating creation-care concerns throughout the curriculum.”

In coordination with the SSA, Fuller is solidifying an action team for developing a seminary-specific stewardship plan and executing a second energy audit. The action team’s activities will touch on facilities, curriculum, relationships with other local institutions, and relationships with local food sources, including a plan to integrate the organic community garden and composting activities with the campus refectory. Fuller Professor Tommy Givens dedicates part of his time to leading sustainability efforts on campus, and says the team is “passionate” about ecology and stewardship efforts, including overseeing garden activities, composting, and outreach to Fuller graduates by encouraging them to go into their various ministries with sensitivity to the stewardship of creation.

The team is looking for both curricular and co-curricular ways of integrating care for creation in innovative ways, with the goal of establishing institutional commitment to apply Christian stewardship principles to society’s policies for the protection of the environment, and to support the call for simpler lifestyles which reflect care in the use of all the

---

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
32 Tommy Givens, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2016. Fuller is Assistant Professor of New Testament Studies, School of Theology, Fuller Seminary.
While Fuller’s president is supportive of these efforts, Givens says it can still be a tough slog making progress. So Fuller has reached out to other institutions who have had success with sustaining the creation care effort. “We’ve been working with Houghton College on how to institutionalize” creation care efforts in order “to not be dependent upon outside funding…there’s a surface level enthusiasm at Fuller, but what a real commitment entails has not been subjected to sustained scrutiny,” Givens says. “I need more than public endorsements. I need money, face time with potential donors, and with other institutional heads.”

Where Fuller has had notable success, however, is in interacting regularly with Pasadena Water and Power, which works directly with the seminary, including inviting Givens and others to its quarterly meetings. “The main rationale for us being involved is to protect Fuller’s interests, like preparing for a hike in rates…the Pasadena water execs tell us how we’re all affecting the energy infrastructure,” and others around the table have brought up issues such as the lack of investment in mid-size and poor people’s homes for energy conservation. “For me to hear that…was awesome. It showed me the people around the table weren’t just thinking about the bottom line, but they were concerned about responsibility at a higher level.”

---

33 Ibid.
34 Tommy Givens, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2016.
35 Ibid. Other participants mentioned were representatives from the Mayor’s office, Cal Tech University, Pasadena City College, the Rose Bowl and other businesses.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
Given’s team is also trying to do a documentary on how to get off a coal economy, which would be a fifteen minute video pointed at Fuller students and staff, showing the relationship between the seminary’s power usage and Pasadena more broadly, including the coal fields one hundred miles away by Salt Lake. It is really about “the integrity of the ecosystem. We also want an alternative vision that other institutions could use or use to model their own activities to get off of fossil fuels.”

The team is organizing workshops and other events that are consistent with greening Fuller’s campus, and sustainable living on the part of students. A Facebook page has been established that details Fuller’s commitment to an environmental stewardship ethic dating back to 1983, including an official statement on creation care that year that states Fuller must “plan to apply the Christian principles of stewardship to our society’s policies for the protection of our environment and to support the call for simpler lifestyles which reflect care in the use of all the earth’s resources.”

Student groups currently partner with local organizations in activities such as organic school gardens, energy consumption and alternative energy sources, composting, clothing repair and modification, and cooking with whole foods.

Asbury Theological Seminary, one of the most well known evangelical seminaries in the nation, incorporates creation care into its curricula and also into its daily activities by actively encouraging students, faculty and staff to participate in lifestyles that care for the environment by learning how to “better steward God’s gift” through opportunities

---

38 Ibid.

such as academic courses focused on creation care, a “community garden/eco-seminary,” lunch forums, events with national speakers, and covenant groups. Asbury’s president, Dr. Timothy Tennent, calls the garden a “living laboratory for creation care.” The course “Bioethics: Creatures, Creation, & the Environment,” part of Asbury’s Christian ethics focus, prepares students for ministry by training them to analyze and address ecological/environmental moral issues from a Christian perspective. The course introduces students to the “basic scientific understandings of the human place in and above n/Nature, including neoDarwinian evolutionary thought and scientific ecology.” The specific purpose of the course is to develop ministers who are responsive to the needs, contexts, and insights of parishioners and members of the larger community, and “to enable ministers to equip their congregations for understanding their moral responsibility in decisions about n/Nature as God’s creation.” The course “Christian Mission and Theology of Creation,” studies the biblical theology of creation, particularly as it relates to the mission of God and the role of the church. Focus is put upon God's redemptive plan, on earth stew-

---

40 Asbury Theological Seminary website, accessed October 19, 2016, http://asburyseminary.edu/students/community-formation/creation-care/. Asbury’s main campus is located in Wilmore, Kentucky, and it has two other campuses in Orlando, Florida and Memphis, Tennessee.

41 Ibid., community garden, http://asburyseminary.edu/students/community-formation/creation-care/community-garden/.


43 Ibid.

44 Asbury Theological Seminary website, October 19, 2016, http://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2303&context=syllabi.
ardship, and on the meaning of "the restoration of all things in the New Creation by the Spirit through the saving and healing work of Jesus Christ."\textsuperscript{45}

Dr. Thomas Tumblin, Associate Provost for Global Initiatives and Academic Affairs at Asbury, says that as a Wesleyan institution, a focus on creation care enables it to do the following:

\ldots connect again with our founder’s heart for creation and heart for humankind’s role in it\ldots That heritage we share has been one that we sometimes forget in all our other study of Wesley. More importantly, it brings us back to those biblical precedents upon which we’re founded. To have, once again, a focus on creation care and sustainability, to call the church to understand\ldots that salvation does mean creation healed, is a fresh kind of renewal for us.\textsuperscript{46}

More indicative of an institutional commitment to environmental stewardship is Asbury’s 2023 Strategic Plan, which includes creation care as one of the seminary’s official strategic goals.\textsuperscript{47} The plan states that the seminary “will develop a range of strategies to promote our stewardship of creation” through “responsible care of creation as stewards of God’s good gifts. Initiatives such as campus wide composting, recycling, and establishing a walking renewal path will be undertaken.”\textsuperscript{48} Asbury has committed to a community garden that is already being established to “promote spiritual renewal and creation stewardship for the Asbury community\ldots As founding members of the Seminary Stew-


\textsuperscript{46} Thomas Tumblin, interview by Seminary Stewardship Alliance (undated), accessed October 12, 2016, \url{http://seminaryalliance.org/asbury-theological-seminary/}.

\textsuperscript{47} Asbury Seminary 2023 Strategic Plan, accessed October 17, 2016, \url{http://asburyseminary.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023-strategic-plan2.pdf}. Creation Care is listed as strategic goal number twelve in the strategic plan.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
ardship Alliance, we will support creation care initiatives through our alumni and consti-

tuencies.”

Asbury’s creation care ethic is dynamic and extends into the community, principally through the organic community garden, which plays a key role in the seminary’s emphasis on clean, healthy living that is shared with local residents. Asbury has an official “Wellness Lifestyle Declaration” which states, “A wellness lifestyle addresses…the spiritual unity in the physical, emotional, social and environmental dimensions of life,” including “creation care and sustainable living.” The economic benefit derived from farming organic produce is also in play, as creation care is embraced by the seminary as an internationally-growing theological, financial and public relations priority. Through its Office of Faith, Work, and Economics, Asbury created the Small Business Incubator initiative, which annually enables a small cohort of about ten students to apply for funding for their proposed business ideas, many of which revolve around the products of the community garden, including growing and selling crops, eggs, or small game through

---

49 Ibid.

50 Asbury Seminary website, accessed October 18, 2016, http://asburyseminary.edu/students/community-formation/creation-care/community-garden/why/. The other Wellness Lifestyle goals include nutrition and fitness; rhythms of work, rest, and play; self-care commitments (emotional, mental health); charitable/volunteer contributions (time, talent, treasure); and community and economic development at home and abroad.

local farmer’s markets and international grocery stores.52 “It’s no mistake that when God created human beings, he put them in a garden,” according to the garden’s manager:53

Gardening has a direct spiritual parallel for the way God intends for us to do His ministry. His ministry involves transforming people’s lives and following the model of preparing the spiritual soil, planting the seed of the Gospel in people’s lives, following up and caring for others through discipleship, and seeing them become fruitful and reproducing their lives into others…this is all of God’s amazing spiritual gardening work.54

Asbury also organizes covenant groups, which offer students and faculty a community that is committed to learning, modeling, forming and teaching others the biblical principles of creation care, in addition to developing practical ways to live out these principles.55 The groups use Blessed Earth’s video and learning materials to study biblical sustainability principles at monthly meetings, and encourage practical and innovative ways to live sustainably for the purpose of fostering a deeper formational experience based upon a biblical understanding of stewardship. As part of its sustainability commitment, Asbury committed forty million dollars to installing new environmentally-friendly family housing, and repurposed all the old fifties-era housing that was replaced.56

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, hosts the SSA and also offers several courses with a creation care focus including “Christian


54 Ibid.


56 Nancy Sleeth, telephone interview by author, May 19, 2016.
Ethics and the Environment,” as part of the Master of Divinity. The course is a study of biblical and theological perspectives on the environment and human responsibility for it, with emphasis on the ecological crisis and its causes (e.g., greed, overconsumption, technology), as well as solutions offered within a Christian worldview. The seminary has also offered “Ethics and Environmental Responsibility,” which analyzes the morality of creation care in a Christian context. Moreover, Southeastern hosts lectures, conferences and symposia on environmental stewardship every year. A course on “Created Order and Environmental Ethics,” focused on a biblical and theological analysis of the relationship between mankind and the created order with emphasis upon the moral implications and issues that accompany the divine call to participate in Christ’s redemption of all creation. Southeastern also has institutional buy-in from its facilities and operations vice president who is “convinced that being a good resources steward is godly….We’ve taken care of the low hanging fruit, like doing an energy audit and installing energy-efficient lights. We even received a state award for replacing our old boiler systems,” according to a seminary representative, who believes that creation care is growing within seminaries and schools alike. The seminary is rather unique in terms of its membership in SSA and


60 Southeastern Baptist Seminary representative, telephone interview by author, November 3, 2016. Interviewee requested anonymity.
something of an “outlier” in the GSI, due to its conservatism. “There’s not a lot of us swimming on this side of the pool.”

Stewardship and creation care principles have been ingrained for ten or twelve years at Southeastern, which started comprehensive recycling ten years ago, “unheard of for a school like ours,” and is planning to install a garden. Southeastern’s position on creation care was a rebuttal of the conservative consensus that it was a socially and theologically liberal issue. The representative describes it as a “a move, not a movement. It was a little shift in eschatology,” over the past ten or fifteen years away from the dominant view of dominion. “It was a change in mindset among the younger people in our church that this mattered. Their understanding of the topic changed and that changed the church.”

The earliest Southern Baptist treatment of creation care dates back to 1992, when Richard Land and Russell Moore gathered a group of Baptists together and wrote a book called The Earth is the Lord’s: Christians and the Environment. While the book was written from a traditionally conservative perspective to combat postmodern and humanist thinking, it also conveys a stewardship approach to caring for the planet because “we are made special by God in His image.”

---

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid. Moore is currently the president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. Land is a former president.
Aside from some of the more well known evangelical seminaries, there is evidence that a creation care ethic is taking hold at smaller institutions as well. Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary has been a leader in the institutionalization of environmental education at seminaries by helping to found the SSA. Garrett’s president, Dr. Lallene Rector, says that the institution “is committed to integrating ecological perspectives and sustainable practices throughout the curriculum, worship and spiritual life, programming, buildings and grounds, and administrative operations of the seminary. It is important to support the preparation of our graduates for effective leadership in the increasingly urgent matters of sustainable living and creation care.” Garrett has developed a curriculum and student experience for individuals who are interested in ecological theology and creation care, providing them with the opportunity to participate in intensive courses on-site in locations, ranging from Chicago’s South Side to rural farmland in America’s heartland. Garrett offers a multitude of courses and lectures incorporating ecological teachings into faith-based learning, taught by Assistant Professor of Theology and Ecology, Dr. Timothy Eberhart, who also traveled with a caravan of students to Standing Rock to oppose the Dakota pipeline. Portland Seminary (formerly George Fox


67 Ibid.

68 Rev. Wayne Meisel blog, “What We Love About This Year’s Seminaries that Change the World,” September 17, 2016, accessed March 5, 2017, http://day1.org/7503-wayne_meisel_what_we_love_about_this_years_seminaries_that_change_the_world. Geisel is director of the Center for Faith and Service at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois.

69 Dr. Timothy Eberhart email with author, October 31, 2016. List of courses and lectures as of access date of March 5, 2017, found here: https://www.garrett.edu/sites/default/files/faculty-cvs/Eberhart_CV.pdf.
Evangelical Seminary) has taken the creation care ethic a step further by offering a creation care specialization in its Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Ministry and Master of Arts in Theological Studies. The courses illustrate a wide range of stewardship-based curricula including “Greening the Church,” emphasizing an intentional awareness of reaching into the pews.

Beth Norcross of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., a mainline Protestant institution, is one of the authors of GSI’s survey of theological schools. Norcross believes that creation care is very “champion driven,” and that often the champion is a faculty member or student who leads the way. “If faculty has heart for this, then there’s something going on. If that person leaves, creation care goes away.” Sustainability of creation care requires institutionalization, so it is critical to “infuse creation care into the culture of the school, so that it is not person-dependent….My personal hope is that beyond specific classes and activities, creation care will be infused throughout all curricula at Wesley,” as well as at evangelical institutions. Norcross believes that the GSI certification could be “transformational” for seminaries, and that “there are so many faith and ecology ministries now in place that it should start making a real difference.”

Despite the inroads made by GSI and SSA, and the enthusiasm with which seminaries are joining, there does not appear to be broad-based knowledge of the specific cre-

---


71 Beth Norcross, telephone interview by author, October 21, 2016.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.
ation care efforts and activities in and amongst the institutions involved with either organization, with the exception of schools that collaborate together. The individuals who do seem to have a broader, but not necessarily comprehensive, understanding of who is doing what are at the higher levels in the SSA and GSI management structure. Norcross, for example, worked with Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Portland Seminary (when it was George Fox Evangelical Seminary) and Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary on the GSI, and so is aware of what creation care efforts are going on at those evangelical institutions. But she is not necessarily aware of the inroads made by Asbury or Fuller, which have the potential to reach many more students given their size. However, Nancy Sleeth, who oversees SSA with her husband Matthew, is very aware of the different ongoing initiatives at member institutions, including how they have grown over time. She perceives the real issue to be with communication across and sometimes within institutions, including keeping up with a creation care movement that appears to be growing more quickly than many people realize.

Norcross admits that lack of communication is a fundamental issue with creation care initiatives, and can stymie the best of efforts, which is one of the reasons Wesley also works closely with the NRPE, which includes many evangelical organizations in its membership. “We had a forty-person meeting this Spring with NRPE regarding what do

---

74 Ibid.

75 Nancy Sleeth, telephone interview by author, May 19, 2016.

people need most” in terms of institutionalizing and growing the creation care ethic at faith-based institutions. The primary need “is communication and networking. So NRPE has put together monthly calls,” which will hopefully assist in the effort. "How our theology is relevant in the midst of this is what's important,” Norcross says. “We must infuse our institutions and completely upend our theology to say, what happens when we become the Flood?”

NRPE’s executive director Cassandra Carmichael believes that creation care is a growing phenomenon overall, and that the effort to “green” religious institutions of higher education is making headway in the United States, but that there are major differences in how to approach the issue:

Seminaries and universities are different entities than denominations and congregations. They are more complex, with…food service, gardens, library, on and off campus activities…you have a cadre that rotates thru every two, three or four years. It's a dynamic student body with a somewhat static faculty and staff, in a complex institutional environment that's multilayered. With all of that, the greening of campuses and seminaries…is a long road because you have to infiltrate or have access to multiple parts of university…You can't turn around a university in a year.

Carmichael says one of the beauties of creation care is that it is “so dynamic and you’re always tending the garden.” Echoing comments from several others interviewed

---

77 Beth Norcross, telephone interview by author, October 21, 2016.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Cassandra Carmichael, telephone interview by author, November 17, 2016.
81 Ibid.
for this thesis, she believes the ICSD report “did not capture everything” going on at religious institutions:

It’s hard to quantify in academic realm because the data are so complex; it’s qualitative not quantitative. You can count courses, but can you count the number of courses that may include environmental issues? Is it addressed to stewardship or dominion? Then, there’s quantifying food and beverage service, or energy use… Quantifying progress is difficult.\footnote{Ibid.}

Universities

Official data on environmental stewardship efforts at American universities in general, collected by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education’s (AASHE) “Sustainability, Tracking, Rating and Assessment System” (STARS), is informative but only presents a partial picture of creation care efforts at evangelical institutions of higher education.\footnote{The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System™ (STARS) is a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance.} The STARS system is a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance, which includes long-term sustainability goals for already high-achieving institutions as well as entry points of recognition for institutions that are taking first steps toward sustainability.\footnote{STARS website, accessed March 6, 2017, https://stars.aashe.org/pages/about/stars-overview.html.} Quantifying evangelical engagement in STARS is challenging due to the fact that the system, which includes more than eight hundred participating institutions, six hundred seventy five of which are in the United States, does not categorize universities and colleges by religious affiliation.\footnote{Ibid.} However, a 2015 research study using
CCCU schools as a case study provides a snapshot of conservative Christian institutions’ engagement in STARS. The study found that sixteen CCCU member and affiliate schools have participated in STARS since its launch in 2010, representing approximately eleven percent of all CCCU institutions.  

Fifteen of the schools are in the United States, and of those, fourteen identify as evangelical. Further, the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), presents a similar snapshot of evangelical involvement. Launched in 2007, the ACUPCC is a “high-visibility effort” to address global climate disruption by creating a network of colleges and universities that have committed to neutralize their greenhouse gas emissions, and accelerate research and education efforts to equip society in re-stabilizing the earth’s climate. Only six evangelical schools have signed on to the ACUPCC (five of which are registered with STARS) out of five hundred ninety five active signatories.

The perceived lack of evangelical participation in data collection or group efforts in stewardship efforts may be due to several factors, one of which is that many evangelical schools simply do not have the staff or funding to oversee consistent reporting on sus-

---

86 Aaron Routhe, “Reading the Signs of Sustainability in Christian Higher Education: Symbolic Value Claims or Substantive Organizational Change?,” *Challenges in Higher Education for Sustainability* (2016), 60. Author’s note: according to the CCCU website, accessed March 8, 2017, [http://www.cccu.org/about](http://www.cccu.org/about), there are a total of 180 CCCU institutions worldwide, 115 of which are in the United States.

87 Designation as evangelical is based upon information obtained from each school’s website. List of schools may be found in Routhe, “Reading the Signs of Sustainability,” 59.


tainability activities, even if creation care has a significant presence institutionally. Another is the high cost of joining an organization like the ACUPCC, which bases its dues upon full time equivalent enrollment and total institutional expenses. Yet another factor is the perceived politicization of environmental efforts, especially if they are linked to climate change, which more conservative schools tend to avoid even if they endorse stewardship activities. Additionally, Routhe’s 2015 quantitative and qualitative analysis of the greening of evangelical universities corroborates what interviewees for this thesis identified as problems in data reporting, including: underreporting of environmental initiatives for a multitude of reasons; varying nomenclature to describe ongoing stewardship efforts which can result in confusion about what is actually going on; and institutional limits on initiating/maintaining sustainability efforts on campus.

Information that is more representative of stewardship activities at evangelical universities may be found by doing a deeper dive into evangelical institutions themselves, including the institutions’ creation care leadership. Quantitatively, however, the number of colleges and universities that may be defined as “evangelical” in the United States is difficult to determine, largely due to how institutions define themselves as well as how

---

90 Lack of funding and personnel were consistently mentioned by interviewees as major reasons for not participating in aggregate data collection efforts, even on campuses with significant sustainability activities.


92 Routhe, “Reading the Signs of Sustainability,” 35.
others define them.93 However, Renewal, a student-driven creation care network, provides a baseline of sorts for Christian universities’ stewardship efforts through its Green Awakening reports of 2010 and 2011.94 Inspired in part by the Sierra Club’s 2008 Faith in Action report, Renewal sought to highlight growing creation care efforts on Christian campuses across the United States and Canada, and also identify motivations as well as challenges to adopting environmental stewardship.95 The 2011 report included researching and documenting campus efforts at sixty Christian institutions (several in Canada), most of which are in the evangelical tradition according to their websites, in five geographical regions: Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West. The report shows significant stewardship and sustainability activity at the institutions, measured across

---

93 The United States Department of Education does not provide this data; other sources list “top ten” or “best” evangelical schools, but do not offer a comprehensive list of the total number of evangelical universities and colleges in the United States. Wikipedia offers a list of hundreds of evangelical “theological schools” in the United States that combines seminaries and universities; however, the definition of “evangelical” in this case is extremely broad. Wikipedia, accessed March 3, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_evangelical_seminaries_and_theological_colleges.


95 Renewal website, accessed October 29, 2016, http://renewingcreation.org/resources/840/the-green-awakenings-report-2010/. The Sierra Club report highlighted “one exceptional faith-based environmental initiative from each of the fifty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico” that “demonstrates the breadth, depth and diversity of spiritually motivated grassroots efforts to protect the planet.” Two mentioned previously in this thesis were included: Northland, Florida was chosen because of Northland Church and Pastor Joel Hunter’s dedication to creation care; Boise, Idaho was also selected due to Tri Robinson’s work with the Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Boise. Sierra Club report, accessed October 29, 2016, may be found here: http://meec.udayton.edu/publications/faithinactionreport2008.pdf.
twenty unique areas.\textsuperscript{96} There has not been an update to these reports since 2011, however, several of the schools examined in the report will be explored as case studies later in this chapter.

A further indicator of the growth of environmental sustainability within higher education, is the fact that over the past two decades a new field of study focused on religion and ecology/environmentalism has emerged within academia, with courses being taught at colleges across the country, and evangelical universities are no exception.\textsuperscript{97} YECA’s Meyaard-Schaap believes that “without a doubt, there are absolutely more stewardship courses” at evangelical universities today than ever before.\textsuperscript{98} “The number that have stewardship or creation care built into the theology and bible curricula, environmental and ecological studies curricula, the student groups dedicated to environmental concerns, dedicated sustainability offices, all of that has increased over past decades.”\textsuperscript{99} According to the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, this “new force of religious environmentalism is growing in churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques around the world. Now every major religion has statements on the importance of ecological prote-

\textsuperscript{96} Green Awakenings Report (2011), accessed March 5, 2017, \url{http://renewingcreation.org/wp-content/uploads/GreenAwakeningsTwo.pdf}. The twenty areas are: existence of sustainability task force/committee; unpaid sustainability coordinator; paid sustainability coordinator; recycling program; composting program; campus garden/farm; traditional events; chapel programming; ecological restoration projects; sustainable campus housing; food service; green building projects; transportation; clean energy; green fund; student club/organization; academic courses; academic majors; academic minors; research/internship opportunities.

\textsuperscript{97} Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, accessed October 15, 2016, \url{http://fore.yale.edu/about-us/}.

\textsuperscript{98} Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, telephone interview by author, September 15, 2016.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
tion and hundreds of grassroots projects have emerged.”

Included in this growth is institutionalization of an environmental ethic at evangelical colleges and universities, although it is difficult to know to what extent it is driven by a deep theology of creation care, or by sharing in the norms and practices of academia in general. For example, Christian ethicist Gushee believes that one of the things that prevented evangelical seminaries from being entirely captured by the conservative right was adherence to the standards of academia and accrediting agencies. These institutions are continually being replenished by faculty that come out of major graduate programs that have been immersed in the norms of higher education. Today, one of those norms is “being green,” whether it is through recycling, LEED-certified buildings or curricula.

Gushee also believes that the literature and emphasis on creation care has mainstreamed over the past four years. It would be the “rare Christian college that would take a Beisner (dominionist) line on creation care,” as most now “have people in their science area who have been reading Bouma-Prediger and DeWitt” and others who do not adhere to a traditional dominion based philosophy with regard to ecology and the natural environment. More importantly, creation care in general is no longer an ideological flashpoint like abortion or gay rights issues. “There's some flex, some diversity of opinion at evangelical universities. For example, Jonathan Merritt had a professor at Southeastern

---

100 Ibid.


102 Ibid.
Baptist Seminary who got him interested in creation care.”

Merritt’s resulting passion for stewardship combined with his deep knowledge of Scripture has led him to become an outspoken evangelical environmental activist in demand as a speaker at colleges, seminaries, churches, news organizations, and conferences on religious and cultural issues.

Although difficult to quantify, the overall growth of creation care at evangelical institutions of higher education may be illustrated by looking at the increase in the number of schools associated with established Christian environmental stewardship organizations. The Au Sable Institute has been in the forefront of linking environmental stewardship principles with Christian schools since the late seventies, and the Institute is still in the vanguard of creation care curricular activities at evangelical universities. Now known as the Au Sable Institute for Environmental Studies, the Michigan-based organization became well-known among colleges and universities for its robust field-study courses in environmental science and environmental studies. Most environmental stewardship scholars at evangelical colleges and universities are familiar with Au Sable directly or indirectly, whether through utilizing the Institute’s curricula or through student and faculty participation in its study abroad programs in creation care. Dr. DeWitt’s reputation as a champion for Christian environmentalism brought needed recognition and pres-

---

103 Ibid.

104 Updated information on writing and speaking engagements may be found on Merritt’s website, accessed October 20, 2016, [http://jonathanmerritt.com/](http://jonathanmerritt.com/).

105 Au Sable website, accessed October 14, 2016, [http://ausable.org/about/history/](http://ausable.org/about/history/). Au Sable’s mission is to integrate “knowledge of the creation with biblical principles for the purpose of bringing the Christian community and the general public to a better understanding of the Creator and the stewardship of God's creation.”

106 Ibid.
tige to Au Sable and greatly contributed to its growth. The organization envisions “a global community equipped with environmental knowledge, skills, and ethics to faithfully and fearlessly pursue the Christian vision of a flourishing earth,” through inspiring and educating people to “serve, protect, and restore God's earth.”

Au Sable has grown from a seventies-era summer nature camp into an environmental institute with a network of more than fifty Christian colleges across the United States. The colleges work with the Institute through a partnership agreement, wherein they recognize Au Sable’s curricula as their own. Dr. Fred Van Dyke, Au Sable's Executive Director, says that prior to partnering with Au Sable, there were relatively few Christian schools with environmental programs. “Au Sable was really the seismic shift in creating a network with support that incentivized the creation of environmental programs at schools affiliated with the CCCU. Most of the programs that got going had some interaction with Au Sable, and continue today.”

Of the approximately one hundred and fifteen schools in CCCU, Van Dyke calculates that about half have credible environmental programs. Of those, forty-six are

---

107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
110 Fred Van Dyke, telephone interview by author, September 28, 2016. The CCCU includes 182 Christian institutions around the world. The 117 member campuses in North America are all regionally accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities with curricula rooted in the arts and sciences. In addition, 65 affiliate campuses from 20 countries are part of the CCCU. According to its website, the organization encompasses 35 Protestant denominations, as well as the Catholic church, in its membership, accessed October 27, 2016, http://www.cccu.org/about.
111 This does not include additional Christian and evangelical schools outside of the CCCU and Au Sable that also do environmental work.
United States evangelical “participating institutions” with Au Sable. A credible program is required for membership with Au Sable, says Van Dyke, and must have “a defined environmentally-focused curriculum, either as a major, minor or concentration, with a stated mission that is biblically grounded, because environmental conservation is a values-laden and mission-driven enterprise. Even secular schools admit that.” In addition to the biblical and theological grounding, there must be one or more dedicated faculty responsible for oversight, definable and stated educational outcomes, and “vocational credibility,” i.e., students must be employed in the actual work of environmental stewardship and creation care while at school or after graduation. The Institute’s first mission is to build environmental science and studies programs at participating schools:

We’re not simply trying to recruit students for our courses. We’re endeavoring to grow an orchard, not just pick apples. Our mission is to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth.

Like many evangelical environmental organizations, Au Sable seeks outside collaboration, as long as it is without compromise. It currently partners with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources on two studies, one of which focuses on reforesting abandoned oil pads, the other focused on Kirkland’s warbler, an endangered species that

---

112 Author email correspondence with Shirley Shane, Office Manager and Admissions, Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies, November 7, 2016.

113 Fred Van Dyke, telephone interview by author, September 28, 2016.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.
nests in just a few locations in Michigan, Wisconsin and Ontario. "We received a grant through the federal Fish and Wildlife Service for the warbler study,“ because its limited habitat “includes just three Michigan counties.” Au Sable also works with private energy companies, which provide a great deal of funding for research, and has “just concluded a tribal study on the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, and also a few studies funded by local groups,” one being the Manistee Lake Improvement Board, which funded an Au Sable study on an invasive aquatic pest threatening the local ecosystem. Another study allowed Au Sable to collaborate with the Michigan Clean Water Corporation to get local citizens involved with monitoring the Manistee River. Au Sable is also commissioned to work with public, parochial and home schools to teach environmental stewardship curricula.

Of the many evangelical colleges involved with creation care via Au Sable, CCCU or on their own, there are several that stand out due to the impressive integration of environmental stewardship programs into their institutions, their willingness to take action both on and off campus, and their prominence within the evangelical community

\[116\] Ibid. Information on warbler obtained from Michigan Department of Natural Resources website, accessed October 20, 2016, [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370_12145_12202-32591--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370_12145_12202-32591--,00.html).

\[117\] Fred Van Dyke, telephone interview by author, September 28, 2016.

\[118\] Ibid. Also see Au Sable website, accessed October 20, 2016, [http://ausable.org/news_and_resources/newsau_sable_teams_with_manistee_lake_improvement_board_to_continue_research_on#.WBP4IErJ5k](http://ausable.org/news_and_resources/newsau_sable_teams_with_manistee_lake_improvement_board_to_continue_research_on#.WBP4IErJ5k).

\[119\] Fred Van Dyke, telephone interview by author, September 28, 2016.
for stewardship efforts. Several case studies will be examined next, including Messiah College, Houghton College, Wheaton and Dordt College.¹²⁰

Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania began its foray into creation care in 1971 after the first Earth Day, with a class designed to bring students together to look at what was going on in the world from an environmental viewpoint. The class, “Man and His Environmental Problems,” was a required course offered to all students during the Winter term. In 1981, the popular “Humankind and the Environment” course inspired the college’s student-led environmental group, Earthkeepers, to start campus-wide recycling, which is still a hallmark of the school. However, it was not until 1993 that the college instituted an environmental science major, based upon a longstanding connection to Au Sable, including the growing Christian vernacular of “Earthkeeping theology.” “I think that was formative for Messiah…We really changed our institutional focus, ethos and curricula at that time,” according to David Foster, Professor of Biology and Environmental Science at Messiah.¹²¹ “By 1999, I was teaching environmental science and had students asking me what could they do right now” from an activist standpoint to combat pollution.¹²² The result was Greenhouse, now named Restoration House, a student-led effort in sustainable campus housing in which students live in an “intentional community” focused on “green living” and caring for the environment. The house limits its use of water, electrical devices, and heat to conserve energy, and also limits waste

¹²⁰ The colleges and universities described here were also consistently mentioned by interviewees as being in the forefront of environmental efforts.

¹²¹ David Foster, telephone interview by author, October 24, 2016.

¹²² Ibid.

189
by sharing items, reducing use of resources, reusing products and recycling, while searching for other innovations to promote sustainable lifestyles.\footnote{Messiah College Restoration House website, accessed October 20, 2016, \url{https://www.messiah.edu/info/21460/residence_life/2413/restoration_house_information}.}

Messiah College offers a Bachelor of Arts in Sustainability Studies, a humanities- and social sciences-focused degree that emphasizes the social, ecological and economic components of sustainable human communities based on creation care and resource stewardship.\footnote{Messiah College website, accessed October 20, 2016, \url{http://www.messiah.edu/info/20503/partnerships/730/fast_facts}. Course description at: \url{http://www.messiah.edu/sustainability-studies-major-pennsylvania}. The degree is offered cooperatively through the departments of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice; Biological Sciences; and Politics and International Relations.} In addition to required course curricula, the program includes cultivation of the on-campus community garden, and internship opportunities with organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee and Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization.\footnote{Messiah website, accessed October 21, 2016, \url{http://www.messiah.edu/sustainability-studies-major-pennsylvania}. This degree is offered cooperatively through the departments of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice; Biological Sciences; and Politics and International Relations.} Messiah also offers a Bachelor of Arts in environmental science, which has creation care at its core according to the course description: “If you care about the responsible stewardship of creation, this hands-on major gives you the chance to experience environmental science with other Christians…who also care about being responsible stewards of creation.\footnote{Messiah course description website, accessed February 28, 2017, \url{http://www.messiah.edu/environmental-science-major-pennsylvania}.} Interested students are also encouraged to study at the Au Sable Institute, and are also advised that by combining a “strong foundation of scientific knowledge and methods with a Christian perspective about God’s creation and your place in it, our inno-
vative, hands-on curriculum, field work, internships, restoration projects, research, study abroad and more will prepare you to make a real and lasting difference in the world.”

In 2007, Messiah repurposed a quarter-acre plot of land on campus into the Grantham Community Garden, which was initiated, and is currently led, by students. The organic garden is a model of community-supported agriculture, and produces thousands of pounds of produce per year. The garden demonstrates and promotes real-life concepts of sustainable agriculture as a necessary dimension of holistic Christian stewardship.

“The presence of the garden in the center of campus, visible to everyone, changed the way we saw ourselves institutionally,” Foster says. “From that garden our sustainability studies focus was formed. That was where we turned the corner.” More significantly, it also resulted in the hire of a full time sustainability coordinator at Messiah, who provides leadership to both the Office of Sustainability and the Sustainability Studies degree program. Brandon Hoover, the current coordinator says, “My motto for work and service is that redemption is participatory, and requires us to work on redeeming both people and our places. For me the best way to do that is through a sustainability framework, (which cultivates) an ethos of civic and ecological citizenship.”

127 Ibid.
129 David Foster, telephone interview by author, October 24, 2016.
The garden initiative is a means to educate students, faculty, and the broader community about the environmental, social, nutritional, and spiritual benefits of sustainable farming. Community members are allowed to purchase portions of the garden, which helps to offset expenses, and then receive produce as it is harvested.\footnote{Eric Norregaard and Kendra Juskus, Eds., \textit{The Green Awakenings Report 2010}, accessed October 21, 2016, \url{http://renewingcreation.org/resources/840/the-green-awakenings-report-2010/}.} The garden also serves as an educational lab for Messiah students and over nine thousand elementary school children who visit the on-campus Oakes Museum of Natural History each year. The museum, built in accordance with state standards, is focused on environmental education and houses more than forty thousand Smithsonian-quality specimens.\footnote{David Foster, telephone interview by author, October 24, 2016. Details on museum at: \url{http://www.messiah.edu/Oakes/index.html}.}

In 2011, Messiah students grew and harvested sunflowers, part of a pilot project called SunFLOWER POWER, that were pressed into high-quality cooking oil used first by the college's dining operations, and then collected and converted into biodiesel to fuel campus utility vehicles.\footnote{Messiah website, accessed October 19, 2016, \url{http://www.messiah.edu/info/20501/our_work/699/energy}.} Messiah is also home to the nation’s fourth largest solar thermal system. Installed in 2011, the system serves all the hot water needs of the three residence halls that comprise the North Complex, which is about half of all the showers on campus.\footnote{David Foster, telephone interview by author, October 24, 2016.} All the domestic hot water needs of these residences, which total one hundred thirteen square feet and nearly five hundred students, will be met by the energy efficient
solar collection system.\footnote{David Foster, telephone interview by author, October 24, 2016. Details on solar system may be found here: \url{http://www.messiah.edu/info/20503/partnerships/730/fast_facts}.} In addition to these ongoing projects, a team of students led by Professor Foster designed and implemented a rain garden stormwater management system for the new Cottage Brook Lane housing development near the Messiah campus. The three rain gardens form the first such system in Upper Allen Township to combine biofiltration and stormwater management on the scale of a residential subdivision.\footnote{Messiah Rain Garden website, accessed October 19, 2016, \url{http://www.messiah.edu/info/20502/impact/1594/community_connection_rain_garden}.} Messiah currently composites about thirty-five thousand pounds of organic material per year, “and at same time we reduce the amount we're wasting through recycling — we post it on the dining room wall. We’ve saved so much in shipping fees for getting rid of food waste that we can pay two work study students to be in charge of composting on campus.”\footnote{David Foster, telephone interview by author, October 24, 2016.} In 2015, Messiah installed a one megawatt natural gas power generation station to run the dining facilities, gym, campus store, and conference complex. The “waste heat” is used to heat and cool six additional buildings.\footnote{David Foster, telephone interview by author, October 24, 2016. A good explanation of “waste heat” may be found at: \url{http://www.heatispower.org/waste-heat-to-power/}.} “The college put the money up front to do it,” says Foster, “more than eight million dollars, plus a million dollar maintenance contract for nine years — after which they will rebuild all the gas turbines. All these thing led one to another, the garden to where we are now.”\footnote{Ibid. Messiah invested $8.3 million, with an additional $1.3 million for the maintenance contract.} The college is also Tree City USA Certi-
fied, and is working to become one of the first universities in the nation to obtain Audubon Certification.¹⁴¹

Although Messiah embraced stewardship early on, the creation care efforts on campus still had to make good business sense. Foster says that while many Christian colleges are struggling financially, Messiah embarked on very careful cost-cutting measures years ago and found that doing things in an environmentally-sound way actually saved money.¹⁴² “We did the climate thing behind the scenes, like energy audits, figuring out our carbon footprint, cost of recycling and so on. If sustainability relies on altruists we are done for. It has to make sense from a cost standpoint too.”¹⁴³ The college was also savvy in getting media coverage for its efforts, dating back to the nineties, when sustainability was new to the American vernacular. “I had live TV coverage in my classes three times because it was still such a new concept,” Foster says.¹⁴⁴

The terminal degrees in sustainability and environmental science are having a significant impact on students. “I’ve never seen a generation of students like the millennials who want to do something now; they feel they can learn the philosophy or theory later,” Foster says. Most importantly, “people must feel that there is hope for the future; scaring people just doesn’t work. They must feel like they can do something, if not to

¹⁴¹ ArborDay.org, accessed October 21, 2016, https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/about.cfm. Tree City USA is a nationwide movement that provides the framework necessary for communities to manage and expand their public trees. Four standards must be met to qualify, as established by the Arbor Day Foundation and the National Association of State Foresters: maintaining a tree board or department, having a community tree ordinance, spending at least $2 per capita on urban forestry and celebrating Arbor Day.

¹⁴² David Foster, telephone interview by author, October 24, 2016

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.
turn us around and get us back to Eden, then at least to mitigate environmental damage and do as well as we can...This is vital for them to survive.”

Houghton College in Houghton, New York not only elevates creation care to a prominent position within the university, but offers strong institutional support from the top down. Dr. Shirley Mullen, Houghton’s president since 2006, issued an official statement on Houghton’s commitment to creation care within a biblical perspective:

As a Christian college, we share with all Christians the responsibility of stewarding and nurturing the marvelous gift of the God's creation. We also have the particular calling of enlarging our understanding and appreciation for the creation – both through the lens of the arts and through the lens of the sciences... not only for ourselves, but also so that we can bring this same understanding to the larger communities of which we are a part... The Book of Genesis gives us a very clear starting place. It sets out at least two principles that must guide our work. First, we have a special charge from God our Creator to care for Creation. We are stewards and we will be held accountable for how we have managed the estate. Second, Genesis states clearly that God, not nature, was “in the beginning”... As created beings, we have been given the gift and the responsibility from our Creator to enjoy and to care for the garden... In imitation of our Creator God, we are invited to work out the particular implications of the general principles given to us in Genesis.

In the fall of 2008, Mullen joined over six hundred other college and university presidents by signing the AUPCC, calling for institutions of higher education to exert real, active leadership in being good stewards of God’s creation. In terms of curricula addressing creation care, the college offers a “partial” listing online of forty-six courses that address environmental and sustainability issues. The school offers degree programs in

---

145 Ibid.


the same areas as well, including a Bachelor of Arts with Environmental Emphasis and a Bachelor of Science with Environmental Emphasis, both of which underscore Christian stewardship of creation as well as environmental awareness and analysis. Field-based courses, including those offered at Au Sable, are part of the course requirements, and graduating students are encouraged to take the New York State civil service exam for application to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to continue their work in the outside world as conservation biologists.\textsuperscript{148} In addition to degree programs, Houghton students may earn certification as an environmental, land resources, or water resources analyst, or as a naturalist, through a combination of courses taken at Houghton and Au Sable.\textsuperscript{149}

Houghton has a paid half-time sustainability coordinator, Brian Webb, who is also the executive director of Climate Caretakers, a broadly evangelical environmental advocacy organization not affiliated with Houghton.\textsuperscript{150} Having a dedicated, paid position devoted to creation care efforts “really made a difference it what we are able to do at the college,” Webb said.\textsuperscript{151} In addition to recycling, composting, and efforts to reduce paper and water use, Webb leads the college’s efforts to promote environmental sustainability and wise stewardship at an institutional level, including student programming activities,


\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{150} Climate Caretakers webpage, accessed October 21, 2016, \url{http://climatecaretakers.org/about/}. The organization describes itself as a non-partisan, non-denominational organization that advocates for specific climate policies its members believe to be consistent with biblically sound principles of stewardship, justice, integrity, and love of neighbor.

\textsuperscript{151} Brian Webb, telephone interview by author, September 5, 2016.
coordinating with faculty to incorporate sustainability into the curriculum, working with facilities to reduce energy use and promote sustainable operations, and overseeing the college’s adherence to the President’s climate commitment goal of being energy neutral by 2050.152

The most notable example of Houghton’s commitment is the completion of a 2.6 megawatt solar system, the largest of any college campus in the state of New York, and which generated more solar energy than any college in the state. In addition, it currently generates enough power annually for nearly three hundred homes.153 “The system was built without any capital costs to Houghton,” Webb says. “Instead, the electric company (WGL Energy) has a twenty-five year purchase agreement with the college, which buys one hundred percent of the energy generated. From a stewardship perspective, the system allows the college to put faith into action and provides us with a valuable teaching tool.”154 The college has also installed low-flow shower heads in the residence halls, saving the college five thousand dollars and conserving more than one million gallons of water per year; created two sustainability internship positions that partner with YECA Fellows; retrofitted exterior lighting with energy-saving LED bulbs; and hosted student competitions focused on energy saving.155

---


155 Ibid. Other initiatives include hosting speakers, such as evangelical climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe.
Houghton is currently pursuing the Arbor Day Foundation “Tree Campus USA” designation, is installing a campus orchard, and has fifty-two volunteer student “eco reps,” who work as a team to plan events and organize initiatives designed to engage their peers and the college campus in creation care activities.¹⁵⁶ The college also recently completed a $4.1 million expansion of the campus science center, which is expected to receive Silver LEED energy certification.¹⁵⁷

Webb says he has seen “quite a significant change in student perception on creation care issues in the past three to five years particularly, on climate change. Three years ago, when talking about climate change on campus it was balancing game. Now, it’s generally accepted as something that Christians need to address.”¹⁵⁸ Webb believes the uptick is due to the millennial generation embracing climate change as a fact of life, and the fact that Houghton has created a safe space for stewardship that is grounded in Christian identity. “Our approach is very intentional. We try not to be political. You can’t frame it in a way that people feel they have to change their identity and join a group that they don’t fit into. If you paint it as a natural part of something that you do belong to because this is part of our faith and heritage, then it's not so offensive.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Houghton website, accessed October 29, 2016, http://www.houghton.edu/creation-care/eco-reps/. The eco reps are led by two student interns who help plan and coordinate activities and are overseen by the Sustainability Coordinator. Some of the 2015-16 activities included organizing a Faith and Justice Symposium, Arts & the Environment Expo, apple orchard planting, weekly College Farmer's Market, and Faith & Sustainability panel discussion.


¹⁵⁹ Ibid.
have absorbed the environmental message from secular culture: “It’s all over public schools…it’s very common to hear climate change referred to, at least in this part of the country. Also, we have strong intercultural, international development major, and creation care climate issues are sort of informally integrated…students hear about it in their courses, and as more students are speaking out, it becomes more of the norm. The culture is shifting. I can see that on our campus.”

Regarding climate change, Webb thinks “a lot of people realize the evangelical church is in some ways the lynchpin on this. It’s so large and influential in conservative politics, and yet at the same time there's a theological argument for acting on climate. So if you can make that argument effectively enough to move evangelicals on climate, then it totally changes how we talk about climate in this country…We’re not all bigots with our heads stuck in the sand.”

Wheaton College, one of the most well known evangelical schools, has made sustainability and environmental stewardship a top priority, financially and educationally. Wheaton is pursuing the LEED Silver certification for its Memorial Student Center renovation, and the LEED Gold certification for the college’s Meyer Science Center. The college reports that the science center uses twenty-five percent less energy than the typical standard in its class, which was achieved by installing an energy-recovery unit in the

---

160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
attic and implementing techniques such as sun shades on the south façade. Seventy percent of the building’s energy is provided by certified renewable energy providers, and water use has also been reduced by forty-one percent over the college’s baseline by installing water-efficient fixtures and using drought-tolerant, native plants in landscaping.

Wheaton’s A Rocha garden, established in the 2010-2011 academic year in the center of campus, provides opportunities for community-building and helps connect the community with the land, expanding the understanding of the link between God’s provision and food production. The garden provides local produce for Wheaton College and the surrounding community, including the donation of crops to a local food pantry, church and others in need. The central location of the garden has resulted in the participation of many students who are not part of the garden committee or A Rocha. The head gardener, Elsemarie DeVries, says that it is exciting to see the Wheaton community work together in an organic sense, which grows when people are engaged in a communal task.

The college’s website features creation care efforts prominently, including a concentration in environmental science with focus areas in international sustainable deve-
development; water, sanitation and hygiene; pollution and toxicology; and climate change.\textsuperscript{168} Going a step further, Wheaton offers students assistance with going into “green careers” upon graduation, including links to different career and internships opportunities in the environmental field.\textsuperscript{169} Wheaton is also making an effort to minimize its ecological footprint from a facilities standpoint, including implementing projects to reduce waste and increase recycling efficiency, conserve fossil fuels, limit the use of water, and transition to “green” chemical cleaners.\textsuperscript{170} The environmental efforts extend to the college’s dining service, which sources organic and locally grown food, and which partners with students to make environmentally friendly choices that reduce food, water, and paper waste.\textsuperscript{171} Wheaton students have initiated environmental groups and projects that advance environmental care on campus, and in the surrounding Chicago area, such as hosting of sustainability competitions; coordinating environmental conservation summits; ecological research; and caring for college gardens.\textsuperscript{172} The university also features a science station at the edge of the Black Hills National Forest in South Dakota, providing students with

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the opportunity to study a range of environmental subjects including botany, ecology, zoology, geology, taught in a field environment.\textsuperscript{173}

Like Wheaton, Dordt College has institutionalized a creation care ethic within its curriculum by offering an environmental studies program, which has as its stated mission “to cultivate stewardship of God's world as a lifestyle and a profession by enabling the campus community to develop a deeper understanding of creation, and by encouraging each person to join with our heavenly Father in the task of maintaining and restoring the earth's beauty and diversity.”\textsuperscript{174} The environmental studies major includes three possible emphasis areas — environmental science, natural resources, and policy and management — and in addition to the standard requirements of an environmental studies major, students are also expected to develop an understanding regarding how humans have "developed" God's world during recorded history, including identifying examples of both good stewardship and abuse.\textsuperscript{175} Dordt affirms its support of stewardship by citing biblical foundations for its environmental studies program on its website:

Environmental studies at Dordt College is founded upon the truth that the earth is the Lord's (Ps. 24:1). He created it (Gen. 1:1), declares it good (Gen. 1:31), knows it intimately (Job 38-41), lovingly sustains it (Matt. 6:25-33), and takes delight in the praise that all of his creation offers (Ps. 148). He created people in his image (Gen. 1:27) and gave us the charge to keep his creation (Gen. 2:15). We also have been given dominion (Gen. 1:28-30), but this place of honor is situated within the context of a garden that has been blessed with vibrant fullness and fruitfulness.


(Gen. 1:22) and that is provisioned daily by the God for whom we steward (Ps. 104). As image bearers, then, we are to exercise this rule with servant hearts (Phil. 2:5-7) and with the love that God showers upon all of his creatures. We have sinned in our failure to keep the earth and in our desire to grasp rather than to serve (Isa. 24:5). But God has loved the cosmos (Jn. 3:16) and has offered redemption through the sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ (Col. 1:19-20). And as penitent, forgiven, and grateful disciples of Jesus, we are enabled by the power of his Holy Spirit to be God's instruments in keeping and redeeming all of creation (2 Cor. 5:18-20).176

Dordt is affiliated with Au Sable and has the most active agricultural program in the CCCU, according to Van Dyke.177 The school offers its students and faculty an on-campus, twenty acre restored prairie as a living laboratory and interdisciplinary learning opportunity. Creating a native prairie was a “dream” of some students and faculty ever since Dordt purchased the land in 2002.178 In 2005, students in a creation stewardship seminar undertook a semester-long research project to study the area and draw up a plan for restoration, which occurred in 2008.179 The prairie is now home to approximately eighty species of wildflowers and grasses.180

In 2015, a group of students initiated a Sustainability Committee dedicated to campus-wide education about sustainable living.181 The committee’s chair, Amanda Don-

176 Ibid.

177 Fred Van Dyke, telephone interview by author, September 28, 2016.

178 Dordt College, Prairie website, accessed March 7, 2017, https://www.dordt.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/4-year-programs/environmental-studies/prairie. The seminar was led by Professor Robert De Haan, professor of biology, chair of the environmental studies department, and director of the Dordt College prairie program

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid.

nell says that the committee’s short-term goals are educating and raising awareness on campus: “We want to talk about recycling, energy, and water usage. We want to make students aware of their consumption habits.” Longer term, Dordt says the committee is working towards making stewardship a significant part of the culture of the student body. For example, “In their first week on campus, we want to demonstrate to new students that recycling is just part of what Dordt students do,” in addition to expanding the recycling program itself, addressing food waste issues and installing a composting system. The Sustainability Committee is planning to start a community garden on campus as well, to help students better understand the source of their food and appreciate the beauty of creation. The school actively encourages students to pursue careers in the environmental field and indicates that over the last few years, Dordt environmental studies graduates have found employment with organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, United States Forest Service, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and many other similar organizations.

Stewardship is cited as being highly influential in sustainability circles at many other evangelical institutions as well, including Goshen College, Lipscomb University, Lubbock Christian University, Pepperdine University and Oklahoma Christian Universi-

---

182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
ty, all of which have embraced the green revolution in a variety of ways, including increasing curricula focused on sustainability, ecology and the environment, as well as campus efforts to reduce carbon footprints. More than sixty of the current signatories of ECI’s Call to Action are current or past evangelical college presidents or affiliates.

Goshen was a charter member of the ACUPCC, and has Ecological Stewardship Committee, composed of students, faculty and staff, is now in place on campus. In addition, the school is the first major customer of regional electricity provider NIPSCO’s Green Power Program, and now voluntarily purchases all of its electricity from renewable energy sources which will reduce the college’s carbon footprint by about forty-five percent. Lipscomb established a Sustainable Practice Institute in 2007, and in the Fall of 2008 began offering an undergraduate major and minor in sustainability. Likewise, Pepperdine has launched a Center for Sustainability, and Faulkner University students have taken the lead in recycling efforts and its issues in Montgomery, Alabama. Lubbock installed recycled shipping containers as dorm rooms, which housed more than two hundred students, and in 2011 the Cardwell Welcome Center received LEED Platinum Certification. At the time, there were only seven LEED Platinum certified buildings in the

---


state of Texas, of which Lubbock was the only university with this highest honor.\textsuperscript{191} In addition, in 2003 the university installed a geothermal system that replaced less efficient boilers and rooftop chillers in several buildings throughout campus.\textsuperscript{192} At Oklahoma Christian, seniors and juniors in an ecology class analyzed their campus’s carbon footprint and discovered, among other things, that the university produced nearly a ton of food waste over a three-day period. Using the data collected on waste, the university estimated that it creates approximately nearly two hundred fifty tons of CO\textsubscript{2} per year. Richard Trout, adjunct professor of biology and the study’s leader said that while the study is “not perfect…it is a very good start for future stewardship efforts.”\textsuperscript{193} Those efforts currently include paper and plastic recycling which have made an impact on the amount of CO\textsubscript{2} the campus produces.\textsuperscript{194}

Restoring Eden’s Peter Illyn believes that evangelical campuses all over the country are leading efforts in Christian higher education to operate more sustainably and biblically. “The projects these campuses have undertaken range from recycling and restoration to transitioning to one hundred precent wind energy and converting waste vegetable oil to


\textsuperscript{192} Lubbock Christian University Strategic Plan 2009-2014 Assessment Record, accessed October 23, 2016, https://theportal.lcu.edu/RightToKnow/Student\%20Right\%20To\%20Know\%20Documents/StrategicPlanAssessmentRecord.pdf.


\textsuperscript{194} Ibid. Although a figure cannot be given as to how much CO\textsubscript{2} it reduces, according to Trout the campus saved approximately 60 trees and 21,000 gallons of water in one calendar year.
biodiesel fuel for campus vehicles.”

Illyn believes that schools that are mission focused with redemptive hope will do well because it’s the mission that defines them, not necessarily increasing their enrollment numbers. “I think they will grow and flourish and become increasingly effective. They believe that non-human creation is included in God's redemptive plan on purpose and they believe that because the Bible is very clear on that….Part of the preparation for the redemptive event is what they believe.”

Former YECA leader Lowe visits colleges across the country to talk about creation care. He’s found that most of the students he speaks with believe in anthropogenic climate change, regardless of their political affiliation. “The vast majority of Christians we’re interacting with there tend to be a lot more concerned and supportive of climate action. That comes from millennial and younger generations, partly because these are issues we’ve always grown up with and issues we’re used to hearing about.”

EEN’s Jim Ball believes the number of youth organizations devoted to creation care has blossomed over the past decade, which means that stewardship will continue to expand institutionally:

Once you have sustainability programs and curricula, it spreads to behavior. Students start creating their own chapters on campus, whether it's biking or recycling or whatever, with the result being that environmental studies is becoming institutionalized at Christian colleges, producing more graduates who not only have ex-

---

195 Peter Illyn, telephone interview by author, September 1, 2016.

196 Ibid.

pertise in the field, but who believe from a faith standpoint that environmentalism is a spiritual calling.  

Creation care appears to be making inroads institutionally at evangelical colleges, universities and seminaries in a way that is sustainable and growing in strength. But what about at the political level, in terms of policy, legislation and other initiatives that affect the United States as a nation? The influence of creation care on environmental legislation, and the future of creation care at the political level, will be examined next.

---

198 Jim Ball, telephone interview by author, December 9, 2012.
CHAPTER SIX

THE FUTURE OF CREATION CARE AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL:
EVANGELICAL INFLUENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
AND LEGISLATION

The literature and other materials examined for this thesis indicate that the post-millennial shift within evangelicalism has resulted in a creation care ethic on the part of believers, especially with regard to environmental activism. Agreement on exactly what that ethic should be varies according to traditionally conservative (dominion) or progressive (stewardship) belief systems. However, there are indications that the trend is in the direction of stewardship, and that activism on the part of evangelicals in the United States will not only maintain with regard to pro-environmental efforts, but will increase across local, state, and Federal levels. There are three indicators that point in this direction.

One indicator is the extent to which activism has expanded into international creation care efforts which have impact at the Federal level, as evangelicals in the United States become more involved in political leadership roles worldwide. A second indicator is the increase over time in political activism by progressive evangelical lobbying organizations, the most active being EEN, which are making progress in terms of policies and legislation supporting increased environmental protection and conservation. This activism appears to be more prevalent and measurable in achieving pro-environment legislative outcomes than are efforts by CASC, which serves as the conservative evangelical voice propounding a dominion, free market based approach to creation care. A third indicator is the growing participation of young evangelicals in stewardship-based activities.
which shows a trend in the direction of more, not less, involvement, as illustrated by an organization like YECA which has seen substantial growth over the past five years.\(^1\)

YECA frequently partners with EEN and CCL in their national, state and local activities, and has become the strongest voice for millennial evangelicals who will become part of the future generation of environmental leaders and policymakers. All three indicators are discussed next.

The Lausanne Movement, comprising a global network of evangelical Christians, is one of the most active international evangelical organizations. The movement took its inspiration from Rev. Billy Graham, who perceived the need for a global congress to re-frame the Christian mission in a world of political, economic, intellectual, and religious upheaval in order to grasp the ideas and values behind rapid changes in society.\(^2\) Lausanne’s first meeting occurred in July 1974, when more than two thousand participants from one hundred fifty nations gathered in Lausanne, Switzerland, for the first International Congress on World Evangelization.\(^3\) *TIME* magazine described it as “a formidable forum, possibly the widest-ranging meeting of Christians ever held.”\(^4\) For Graham, it was the culmination of his wish to “unite all evangelicals in the common task of

\(^1\) Kyle Meyaar-Schaap, telephone interview by author, September 15, 2016. In 2012 YECA had twelve signatories on its Call to Action, which has increased to eleven thousand as of 2016. The Call to Action may be found at: [http://www.yecaction.org/](http://www.yecaction.org/).


\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid.
the total evangelization of the world.” The Lausanne Covenant, drafted by an international committee at the July meeting, defined the necessity and goals of evangelism, including a section on social responsibility. The Lausanne website describes the covenant as “one of the most significant documents in modern church history; it would bring together evangelicals from diverse backgrounds for missional partnership and shape much of their endeavors for the rest of the century.” The meeting comprised some of the world’s most respected evangelical thinkers of the time, including Francis Schaeffer, whose 1970 book, Pollution and the Death of Man, served as a touchstone for what became the creation care movement years later.

In 2010, at its third international meeting, the Lausanne Movement officially added creation care as an integral part of its gospel mission, known as the The Cape Town Commitment. Four thousand Christian leaders representing nearly two hundred countries attended the 2010 Congress in Cape Town, South Africa. Christianity Today described the meeting as one in which “Americans aren’t dominating,” and which featured a younger, more ethnically diverse, and more geographically varied consortium of evangel-

5 Ibid.


7 Ibid.

8 Francis Schaeffer’s book is a Christian response to issues concerning ecology, and was cited by many interviewees for this thesis as a seminal work for their stewardship-based creation care beliefs. In addition to Graham and Schaeffer, other notable speakers at the 1974 conference included theologian and first editor of Christianity Today Carl Henry; Presbyterian minister Ralph Winter, founder of the United States Center for World Mission and the International Society for Frontier Missiology; and worldwide evangelical leader John Stott, founder of the Langham Partnership.

ical leaders than ever before (planners ensured that fifty-five percent of the participants were under age fifty).\textsuperscript{10} Rev. Edward Brown, a member of the United States delegation who served as the Lausanne Catalyst for Creation Care, was an active participant at the 2010 meeting. Approximately eighteen months before Lausanne, Brown met with Rev. Dr. S. Douglas Birdsall, honorary chairman of the Lausanne Movement, and “pushed him hard to include creation care at the Cape Town meeting.”\textsuperscript{11} Participants agreed, with the resulting document reflecting Lausanne’s growing commitment to a postmillennial outlook on God’s creation, stating in part:

\begin{quote}
We cannot claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance. We care for the earth and responsibly use its abundant resources, not according to the rationale of the secular world, but for the Lord’s sake. If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says ‘Jesus is Lord’ is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ’s Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.\textsuperscript{12}

The document also does not shy away from terminology that, in the United States at least, imparts a political stance:

\begin{quote}
Probably the most serious and urgent challenge faced by the physical world now is the threat of climate change. This will disproportionately affect those in poorer countries, for it is there that climate extremes will be most severe and where there is little capability to adapt to them. World poverty and climate change need to be addressed together and with equal urgency.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}


\end{flushright}
The Cape Town meeting also gave rise to the Lausanne Creation Care Network, which is led by Brown. The network, in partnership with A Rocha International and Care of Creation, Inc., developed the Creation Care and the Gospel Global Campaign, a five-year, five hundred thousand dollar effort to establish evangelical creation care movements around the world. The idea behind the campaign is to “jumpstart” a global creation care movement that is biblically based, strengthens churches, and provides a model for wider society to learn from. In 2014, campaign conferences began taking place worldwide, including in the United States in July, 2015, at Gordon College, a liberal arts evangelical institution in Wenham, Massachusetts. The conference included approximately one hundred participants from evangelical and secular organizations, including “the best scientific, theological and practical minds in the U.S. and Canadian evangelical communities,” according to Brown. Recognizing that a creation care movement in the United States has already been established, but that it “has not yet penetrated within the evangelical community to the extent that is needed,” the conference focused on “celebrating that movement and laying groundwork for a more effective outreach to the larger evangelical

---


community in both countries.”\(^{18}\) The conference resulted in a renewed commitment to creation care, fossil fuel divestment, climate justice and sustainability for participants.\(^{19}\)

The Wenham conference also helped to launch a national movement in the United States called Climate Caretakers in August, 2015, which Brown leads.\(^{20}\) The organization describes itself as non-partisan, non-denominational, but with a policy focus:

> We are intentionally Christian and broadly evangelical in the sense that we seek to integrate our prayers, actions, and beliefs with the truth of the Bible. We do not support specific political candidates, but do advocate for specific climate policies that we believe to be consistent with biblically sound principles of stewardship, justice, integrity, and love of neighbor.\(^{21}\)

Climate Caretakers’s founding members are drawn from organizations which have a solid track record in moving environmental protection initiatives forward including EEN, YECA and CRCNA, and has launched its own lobbying effort entitled “Acting in Faith: 100 Days of Prayer and Action.”\(^{22}\) Planned activities in Washington, D.C., include delivering an open letter to Congress soon after the hundredth day of the Trump presidency, to be signed by “thousands of evangelical Christians” asking Congress to act on climate change, as well as organizing a conference called “Christian Climate Advocacy Days” in Spring, 2017.\(^{23}\) The conference involves participating in the People’s Climate March, and


\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.


\(^{22}\) Ibid., Next 100 Days, accessed January 23, 2017, http://climatecaretakers.org/2017/01/20/the-next-100-days/. In addition to EEN, YECA, CRCNA and the Lausanne Creation Care Network, founding members include Eden Vigil, Care of Creation, Houghton College and Micah Challenge.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
sending eighty evangelical representatives to Capitol Hill to advocate with their members of Congress on climate change.\textsuperscript{24} Climate Caretakers also posts daily prayers on its Facebook page focused on the new administration, bipartisan solutions on climate action, clean energy, the vulnerable and marginalized, and protection of creation.\textsuperscript{25}

The Lausanne Creation Care Network also played a crucial organizing role to bring broad evangelical partnership to another international effort discussed previously, the Paris Agreement resulting from COP21. The network was part of a significant evangelical presence, along with other faith communities, that helped ensure the success of the Paris Agreement in 2015. A senior State Department official who was part of the United States delegation stated that “the faith community has been essential in making the case that confronting climate change is our moral responsibility. The Christian community has led that effort, helping to push for a strong agreement that protects vulnerable and threatened communities.”\textsuperscript{26}

Building upon the Paris Agreement, the twenty-second Council of Parties (COP22) meeting was held in Marrakech, Morocco in November, 2016. While the Paris Agreement had put in place the overarching framework and goals for international cli-

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. The People’s Climate March will take place on April 29, 2017; lobbying activities are scheduled for May 1, 2017.


mate action, the focus of COP22 was on implementation of the accord, with further decisions required on a wide range of topics, including mitigation, adaptation, finance, transparency, a new “global stocktake” process, market mechanisms, and compliance.\textsuperscript{27} The presence of evangelicals at COP22 was not as considerable as at COP21, but their commitment was still significant. They, and other religious leaders successfully called for an addendum to the Paris Agreement to help nations meet their climate change goals through reducing carbon emissions.\textsuperscript{28} In addition, the religious delegation proposed efforts to mitigate human greed, ignorance and hatred of the “other,” which they believe are the root of the climate crisis.\textsuperscript{29} The delegation stated that a major shift in consciousness is required if humankind is to live within the Earth’s resource capacity.\textsuperscript{30} Cizik, the evangelical member of the delegation, left no doubt about the role of politics in the climate change equation:

Being here in Marrakech is a reminder that the United States is not the only star in the sky, as over 100 countries have committed to implementing the Paris Climate Agreement…While America may depart from its leadership role, given the election outcome, our biblical duty as Christians remains the same — to be stewards

\textsuperscript{27} Center for Climate And Energy Solutions website, accessed January 28, 2017, https://www.c2es.org/international/negotiations/cop22-marrakech/summary. \textsuperscript{28} GlobalPolicyJournal.com, accessed January 28, 2017, http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/26/04/2016/paris-agreement-when-treaty-not-treaty, defines “global stocktake” as a proposed review every five years on the impact of individual countries’ climate change actions. The Paris Agreement is legally binding in some respects and not others, which is why it is not technically treated as a treaty in the United States, meaning that it did not require the Senate’s advice and consent.


\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
of creation (Genesis 2:15). We have to re-double our commitment to ecological protection and speak the truth about any retreat from protection of creation.\textsuperscript{31}

An additional outcome of the Marrakech conference was a new “Interfaith Climate Change Statement to World Leaders,” signed by more than three hundred faith leaders from fifty-eight countries.\textsuperscript{32} The statement summarizes the key policy points of COP22, and primarily focuses on the Paris Agreement entering into force:

At this critical juncture, as governments implement the Agreement, we must deepen our awareness and discern what it means to be in the right relationship with one another, our Earth and all living beings. Our desire for limitless growth and power is having devastating consequences - leaving our Earth community polluted, impoverished and vulnerable. We respectfully ask those who make decisions on how energy systems are financed, sourced and distributed to ground their decisions in a humble and compassionate reverence for the interconnectedness of all life.\textsuperscript{33}

CRCNA’s Killmer reiterated that less evangelical participation in Marrakech did not signify a decrease in creation care focus. “Paris was the main event and the best chance we had to convince people of the U.S. that the Paris agreements were important and deserved their attention.”\textsuperscript{34} In January, 2017, a letter was sent to the Trump transition team from an interfaith coalition including evangelicals, requesting a meeting with the administration’s staff, and urging President Trump to “support policies that will safeguard


\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Rich Killmer email with author, January 28, 2017.
God’s creation, address the impacts of climate change on our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, and fulfill our moral obligation to future generations in the United States and internationally.”  

Citing security and health concerns, the letter called on the new administration to support the United States’ commitment to COP22 because “other countries are moving forward…and it is in the U.S. interest to maintain our leadership role.”

Evangelical support is also evident in another internationally-focused environmental initiative, one which resulted in substantial funding from the United States, the Green Climate Fund (GCF). GCF is a global fund promoting cooperative, cost-effective and compassionate approaches to help millions of people across the world who are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. GCF was created by the UNFCC in 2010 to support a “paradigm shift in the global response to climate change” by allocating resources to low-emission and climate-resilient projects and programs in developing countries. The fund is meant to collect and distribute money from developed nations to help poorer and developing countries lower future carbon emissions and prevent further damage from the effects of climate change. EEN and other faith organizations advocated for the United States to take the lead in contributing to the GCF as part of taking responsibili-


36 Ibid.


ty for its role as a major carbon emitter and acting as a responsible leader of the international community. In 2016, evangelicals in the United States were among more than one hundred other faith organizations that sent a letter to Congress asking it to support President Obama’s FY2017 budget request of seven hundred fifty million dollars for the GCF, stating in part, “Addressing the harmful impacts of climate change upon the most vulnerable peoples and the future of all God’s creation is the moral responsibility of our nation, and our sacred task as people of faith.” Although unsuccessful in their attempt to sway Congress to authorize the payment, President Obama used executive powers to provide partial funding as one of his last acts in office. In January, 2017, the State Department announced a United States contribution of five hundred million to the GCF, with another two hundred fifty million dollars promised. Creation care activists responded supportively, with YECA’s statement providing a particularly succinct observation on behalf of young evangelicals:

It is simply a fact that those hit hardest by the impacts of climate change are those that have contributed the least to the problem. Given the disproportionate burden that our changing climate is placing on the poor and the marginalized around the world, it is a moral imperative that the U.S. do everything possible to ensure that climate mitigation and adaptation is as just and equitable as possible…If the Unit-


Domestically, there is solid evidence that progressive evangelicals are continuing and expanding their creation care work as well. EEN has launched a bipartisan campaign in support of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), lobbying Congressional members on both sides of the aisle to permanently reauthorize the fund.\footnote{CreationCare.org blog, accessed February 1, 2017, http://www.creationcare.org/pro-life_christians_encouraged_by_bipartisan_action_on_land_and_water_conservation.} LWCF, which operates under the National Park Service, was established by Congress in 1964 to fulfill a bipartisan commitment to safeguard the nation’s natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities for Americans.\footnote{National Park Service website, accessed February 1, 2017, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/index.htm.} The fund supports itself by investing earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing, and is used for the purposes of strengthening communities, historic preservation and protecting the national endowment of lands and waters.\footnote{Ibid.} At the local level, the program provides matching grants to State and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities; at the federal level, the fund is used to acquire lands, waters, and other interests to achieve the natural, cultural, wildlife, and recreation management objectives of the National Park Service.\footnote{Ibid.} In January, 2017, EEN was “encouraged by a rare display of bipartisan cooperation,” between Congressman Patrick Meehan (R, PA-7)
and Congressman Raul Grijalva (D, AZ-3) when they introduced legislation in the United
States House of Representatives to permanently reauthorize LWCF.\footnote{CreationCare.org blog, accessed February 1, 2017, http://www.creationcare.org/pro-life_christians_encouraged_by_bipartisan_action_on_land_and_water_conservation.} EEN framed the
issue in pro-life terms, declaring on its website “Pro-Life Christians Encouraged by Bi-
partisan Action on Land and Water Conservation,” and further stating that “Congress
needs to permanently re-authorize this effort that doesn't cost taxpayers a dime. All Amer-
ica values our public lands and we are grateful to Representatives Meehan and Grijalva
for standing up for the majority of Americans.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Evangelical groups actively protested the Dakota Access Pipeline at the Standing
Rock Indian Reservation and the Keystone XL Pipeline, neither of which were cleared
for construction under the Obama administration. However, President Trump committed
to approving both pipelines, as well as streamlining the environmental assessments (EA)
The administration’s decision to proceed with the pipelines has given new urgency to
evangelical creation care activists who have a history of advocating against pipeline con-
struction, including partaking in protests around the country, initiating and signing peti-
tions and issuing denominational support statements.\footnote{ESA website, accessed February 3, 2017, http://www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org/creation-care/how-then-shall-we-respond/.} An expert on public policy and

\textit{221}
public opinion on the environment, University of Michigan professor Barry Rabe, suggested President Obama’s unilateral moves against pipeline construction prompted a growing conservative backlash.\(^{52}\) But he also says there has been a shift in public opinion, as illustrated by the recent report issued by Michigan University’s Center for Local, State and Urban Policy that found Americans’ belief that climate change is happening is “back at the high water mark,” with seventy percent now acknowledging the phenomenon is real, a rate last reached in 2008.\(^{53}\) “Something may be happening there,” says Rabe, “and in particular the two different demographic groups that jumped up quite a bit were Republicans and evangelical Christians.”\(^{54}\) The report finds the most notable gains overall among evangelical Christians, whose belief that climate change is real rose sixteen points from forty-nine percent in Spring, 2015, to sixty-five percent in Fall, 2015.\(^{55}\)

The Dakota pipeline, projected to run from the Bakken oil fields in western North Dakota to southern Illinois, crosses beneath the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, as well as under part of Lake Oahe near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Many in the Standing Rock Sioux tribe consider the pipeline and its intended crossing of the Missouri River to constitute a threat to the region’s clean water and to ancient burial grounds, a view shared by protestors. Beginning in August, 2016, evangelicals from around the na-


\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.

tion, including those affiliated with YECA, EEN and ESA, joined with the Standing Rock tribe and other religious and secular activists to protest completion of the pipeline on tribal lands. In addition, YECA penned a letter to President Obama, his Chief of Staff Dennis McDonough, and Assistant Secretary of the Army (Public Works) Jo-Ellen Darcy, outlining young evangelicals’ concern from a Christian stewardship viewpoint:

I write to you on behalf of hundreds of young, evangelical Christians across the country who are closely following the ongoing developments around the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) and the acts of resistance from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe….Nearly 150 young Christians from across the country add their voice to this letter and call on you to halt construction of this project and to order a thorough EIS of the pipeline. We do this because we believe that our faith calls us to love God, to love God’s earth, and to love our neighbor. We cannot stand silently by as our indigenous brothers and sisters put their lives and bodies on the line in the fight to assert their treaty rights and to protect their land, water, culture, and people. Our commitment to the gospel of justice and reconciliation calls us to solidarity.\(^56\)

The Keystone Pipeline System is an oil pipeline system in Canada and the United States that was commissioned in 2010, and runs from Western Canada to Illinois, Texas and Oklahoma. The pipeline came into greater prominence when a planned fourth phase, Keystone XL, attracting growing environmental protest, became a symbol of the battle over climate change and fossil fuels. Evangelical voices have been part of the faith contingent protesting the pipeline since its inception, treating issues such as local sustainability, poverty, and clean energy as holistically pro-life.\(^57\) An EEN board member was

---


among those who testified at the State Department in opposition to the pipeline, in addition to evangelical efforts at the local and national levels to stop construction.\footnote{Testimony of John Elwood at U.S. Department of State, Keystone XL Pipeline Oil Project Public Meeting, October 7, 2011, accessed February 3, 2017, \url{https://keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov/documents/organization/181183.pdf}. Testimony found in pages 113-115.} When President Trump signed executive orders clearing the way for construction of both the Dakota and Keystone XL Pipelines as one of his first actions in office, YECA and other evangelical voices once again responded by issuing a statement resolving to continue the struggle against both structures:

YECA is deeply disappointed by President Trump’s actions today…These actions will not only damage the critical climate gains of recent years, but they will also impede the gathering momentum of the clean energy revolution already underway around the world….As evangelical Christians, we are committed to a vision of the gospel that understands that all things are under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and that the entire creation is being reconciled back to God through Jesus. This commitment will always lead us to advocate for the well-being of all people and for the protection of God’s good creation. We will continue to stand with those around the world who are made most vulnerable by a changing climate….We believe that God has more in store for his world.\footnote{YECAaction.org website, accessed February 1, 2017, \url{http://www.yecaaction.org/yeca_concerned_kxl_dapl}.}

More successful was the evangelical effort in garnering support for the EPA’s industry guidelines on toxic emissions in 2016, entitled \textit{Control Techniques Guidelines}, which govern volatile organic compounds and other toxins that are by-products of the oil and gas industry.\footnote{EPA website, \textit{Control Techniques Guidelines for the Oil and Natural Gas Industry (EPA-453/B-16-001, October 2016)}, accessed February 3, 2017, \url{https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-10/documents/2016-ctg-oil-and-gas.pdf}.} EEN organized more than ninety thousand evangelicals from twenty-one affected states to call on the EPA for strong action to reduce these pollutants, with EEN’s president Hescox personally “encouraging my senior level contacts at EPA to
make progress on pollution from existing natural gas infrastructure.”61 EEN and its supporters praised the regulations as “an important step in the right direction on protecting our children from pollution that threatens their health….As pro-life evangelicals, we have a special concern for the unborn. We want children to be born healthy and unhindered by the ravages of pollution even before they take their first breath.”62

The Climate Solutions Commission Act of 2016, H.R. 6240, another piece of legislation that EEN is working to support, would create a commission tasked with identifying economically viable policies to achieve pollution reduction goals “that reflect the latest scientific findings of what is needed to avoid serious environmental consequences of a changing climate.”63 The bipartisan Act was introduced in the House of Representatives in September, 2016, by a group of seven representatives (three Republicans, four Democrats), and referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, in addition to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.64 If enacted, the bill would establish a commission to undertake a comprehensive review of economically viable public and private actions or policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the United States; make recommendations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to the President, Congress, and the States; and use as its goals for emissions reductions those estimated rates of reduction that reflect the latest scientific findings of what is needed to avoid serious human health


62 Ibid.


64 Ibid.
and environmental consequences of a changing climate.\textsuperscript{65} CCL, in addition to EEN and other creation care lobbyists, remain cautiously optimistic that the bill will be reintroduced in the new Congress and become law.\textsuperscript{66}

For faith-based environmental activists, the result of the 2016 presidential election presents a new set of obstacles, as President Trump's stated skepticism of anthropogenic climate change conflicts sharply with the creation care mandate to act as responsible stewards of the planet.\textsuperscript{67} Many fear that the environmental progress achieved under the previous administration may be lost, but activists such as Shantha Ready Alonso, executive director of Creation Justice Ministries, have remained optimistic: "We operate on faith not fear. And we are not going to assume that views can't change."\textsuperscript{68} Because evangelical Christians voted for Trump in overwhelming numbers, activists hope to find grounds for engagement with these groups on climate change and the environment. EEN’s Hescox believes faith-based environmental groups can continue to work with Congress by defining issues through a conservative lens.\textsuperscript{69} A member of the Christian Coalition believes that with Trump in office, creation care activists from traditionally conservative populations, such as those within the SBC, will now have a chance to push a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{67} A comprehensive list of President Trump’s tweets on climate change and global warming may be found on twitter.com, accessed February 3, 2017, https://twitter.com/search?q=climate%2C+OR+warming+from%3Arealdonaldtrump&ref_src=twsrch%5Etfw.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
stewardship agenda from within, using the vernacular of the Republican right: “People who have been framed as liberal are sometimes a turnoff…I'm not asking you to respond to a climate crisis…(however) we are commanded by God to be stewards of this planet. From Genesis thru Revelations.” Brown, of Climate Caretakers, observes that the Trump presidency has re-energized creation care activism:

We have some headwinds now. I would say that we may be slowed down for a year or two….But I've never seen so much energy within the creation care movement as I have right now. We can't just take for granted that we have a friendly administration that will do our work for us. We have to fight for this like we did in the seventies….For all the headlines about evangelicals supporting Trump, there are just as many dismayed by what we're seeing in Washington right now.

Evangelicals who adhere to a dominion-based view of the environment, or who define stewardship within the context of dominion, such as Beisner of CASC, find much to like in Trump’s stated environmental perspective. This is true especially with regard to international commitments like COP21 and COP22, which conservative evangelicals, like most conservative Americans, view negatively. A primary reason for their dislike is the traditionally conservative belief that international treaties and agreements can potentially undermine United States sovereignty. In addition, in relation to environmental commitments specifically, CASC distrusts the mainstream science indicating anthropogenic impact on the environment, including interpretations of the effects of climate change on the earth. Although COP21 and COP22 were characterized as agreements,

---

70 Christian Coalition representative, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2016. Interviewee requested anonymity.


not treaties, by the United States, Beisner and others within CASC have repeatedly claimed that the agreements were, in actuality, treated like treaties by the Obama administration. As such, CASC argues, they are subject to Congressional ratification, which would inevitably doom them to failure:

What Trump should do with the Paris treaty, by the way, is not simply to ignore it, and not to “withdraw” from it, but to announce that he agrees with all the nations around the world that, contrary to Obama, it is a treaty and therefore the U.S. never has been and will not be a party to it without Senate ratification. He should then submit it to the Senate, where it will be soundly defeated.73

Beisner says that neither he nor CASC has been directly or indirectly involved with agency leaders at EPA and elsewhere on environmental efforts or initiatives, but that he is aware of other creation care advocates who, as he notes:

...have sought and gained such access — and that agency leaders have sought them, too. For instance, I consider the relationship between the Evangelical Environmental Network and the EPA, particularly with regard to the Mercury Air Toxics Standards (MATS) and the Clean Power Plan, to be such as to compromise EEN’s objectivity — or, to put it more bluntly, I consider EEN to be exploited by the EPA on those issues.74

The professed lack of involvement in lobbying campaigns is not entirely accurate, as CASC has involved itself with activities that, while not ostensibly connected to agency leaders, are nevertheless political in nature. ThinkProgress, a progressive political news blog, revealed that according to public records CASC has ties to the oil industry, as well as the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow (CFACT), which conducts policy and


74 E. Calvin Beisner, email interview by author, February 27, 2016.
lobbying work on the environment from a libertarian perspective. Beisner also sits on CFAC'T’s board of advisors. In January, 2015, CASC released an open letter to President Trump supporting the nomination of Scott Pruitt, a long term critic of the EPA who has sued the agency repeatedly as Oklahoma attorney general, to head the EPA. The letter, signed by more than one hundred evangelical, mainline Protestant, Catholic and Jewish representatives from various religious, scientific and policy organizations, reiterates a politically conservative stance with regard to environmental protection, and also invites the new administration to call on CASC for assistance:

Some radical environmentalists and religious activists oppose Mr. Pruitt because he does not embrace their exaggerated fears of human-induced global warming—fears that go well beyond the empirical evidence crucial to genuine science—or their antipathy to the development of the abundant, reliable, affordable energy indispensable to lifting and keeping whole societies out of poverty and the disease and premature death that invariably accompany it. We urge you therefore to stand firmly behind your nominee, and we commit ourselves to supporting him in the confirmation process that lies ahead. We welcome you and your Administration to call on us to assist in any way we can.

In May, 2008, CASC, in collaboration with the ERLC and Family Research Council, embarked on a “We Get It!” campaign asserting that the science is unclear on the cause of climate change, and the concern that some environmental proposals based on


78 Ibid.
unfounded conclusions will have especially negative effects on the poor. A continuing goal of the campaign is to gather one million signatures for the We Get It! Declaration, which questions the accuracy of anthropogenic climate change and plays to fears of unwelcome government intervention: “Some say that to be a good steward of God’s creation, you must be convinced that human activities caused most of the very slight warming of the last 150 years, that global warming is likely to be catastrophic, and that stopping it requires drastic government action.” The We Get It! website indicates that “thousands” of pastors, Christian leaders, policy-makers, theologians, and Christian organizations have signed the declaration, including “charter endorsements” by current and former presidents of the Southern Baptist ERLC; James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family; and Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), former Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and noted climate skeptic. The declaration, states in part:

Our stewardship of creation must be based on Biblical principles and factual evidence. We face important environmental challenges, but must be cautious of claims that our planet is in peril from speculative dangers like man-made global warming….A clean, healthful, beautiful environment is a costly good, and like all other costly goods, wealthy people can afford more of it than poor people. This means that environmental protection policies must be carefully crafted so as not to stop or reverse economic development but to promote it….Concern for and protection of the poor is a hallmark of Christian faith and ethics. So is the exercise of godly dominion over the rest of the earth, as instructed in Genesis 1:28: “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the


81 Ibid.
earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.\(^{82}\)

CASC also aligns itself with well known conservative organizations, such as the Heritage Foundation, which do engage in lobbying activities. In October, 2015, CASC premiered its new film, “Where the Grass is Greener: Biblical Stewardship vs. Climate Alarmism,” at the Heritage Foundation headquarters in Washington D.C. Described as a “blockbuster one-hour documentary” the film includes more than thirty representatives from scientific, economic, theology, ethics, and public policy organizations who “address global warming and climate policy from the Biblical worldview perspective to protect the world’s poor from harmful climate and energy policies.”\(^{83}\) The film characterizes mainstream climate change science and current environmental mitigation policies as extremist, and in some cases, immoral.\(^{84}\) In advance of the film’s premier, Beisner published an article online stating that “climate alarmism…threatens liberty and increases abortion, human trafficking, government debt and poverty.”\(^{85}\) The film’s debut was preceded five years earlier in 2010 by a twelve-part DVD series entitled “Resisting the Green Dragon,” that CASC produced also in collaboration with the Heritage Foundation, which pro-


\(^{84}\) The movie trailer may be accessed for free at http://wherethegrassisgreenerthemovie.com/.

claimed the environmentalist movement as “One of the greatest threats to society and the church today….”

As the most vocal and active critic of progressive evangelical creation care efforts, CASC has had success in drawing believers who agree with its free market, dominion approach to environmentalism, although there is no way to determine to what extent the organization’s views reflect those of evangelicals as a whole, particularly millennials. Even less clear is CASC’s actual impact, if any, on environmental policy and legislation at any level, although the organization’s website offers a plethora of information on studies published through the Acton Institute, petitions and declarations on various issues, occasional Congressional testimony, and public relations materials. While the progressive creation care movement has come to embrace political activism as part of its evangelistic mandate dating back to at least the 1970s, CASC has operated in a largely reactionary way, beginning with the release of its founding document in 2000, as a response to the increasing success of creation care leaders like Cizik. By that time, the creation care movement had already staked claim to a stewardship orientation, and gained publicity in both evangelical and mainstream media. Further, the international religious community had begun to support creation care efforts by this time, putting even more force behind the movement, as illustrated by the papal encyclical, *Laudato Si.*

---


87 Ibid., http://cornwallalliance.org/take-action/petitions/.
Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical on ecology, *Laudato Si*, arguably the most powerful religious statement on creation care published in modern times, leaves no doubt about the Vatican’s position on climate change for the world’s one billion Roman Catholics (including twenty-one percent of the United States population)\(^{88}\) — that the science of climate change is “solid,” that there is a “necessity to act,” and that “policy and political leadership” are urgently needed to drastically reduce harmful emissions and develop sources of renewable energy.\(^{89}\) The encyclical was deliberately delivered before COP21 in Paris because the Pope wished to directly influence the outcome of the meeting, according to Bishop Marcelo Sorondo, chancellor of the Vatican’s Pontifical Academy of Sciences.\(^{90}\) Not surprisingly, progressive evangelicals welcomed the encyclical, and pledged to work with Catholics in support of the Pope’s message. Dozens of evangelicals and Catholics signed on to a full page advertisement in *Politico Magazine* urging “elected officials to reflect on the Pope’s words and recognize that climate change, poverty and extreme inequality — interconnected issues that can’t be understood in isolation — are defining

---


challenges of our day.”

Deborah Fikes, the World Evangelical Alliance’s (WEA) spokesperson to the United Nations, commented:

> By writing this encyclical and talking about climate change in the United States, Pope Francis is setting a new norm. He is challenging people of faith to do more. No matter our political or religious leaning though, we all need to do more. We have the most critical issue in human history to address. Together.

Cizik called *Laudato Si* an “inflection point” in the debate about climate change because the Pope has “called for an ‘ecological conversion for the faithful.’ That’s what evangelicals need to do. It's to begin to see what's happening to the Earth. It's described persuasively in the encyclical: Man is doing this to our environment, our ‘common home,’ as the Pope calls it.”

Conservative evangelicals, however, were not supportive of the Pope's message. One year before the Pope officially delivered *Laudato Si*, Beisner, representing CASC, said, “The Pope should back off…The Catholic church is correct on the ethical principles but has been misled on the science. It follows that the policies the Vatican is promoting are incorrect. Our position reflects the views of millions of evangelical Christians in the U.S.” Subsequent to the encyclical’s delivery, Beisner issued an open letter to the Pope...

---


refuting the need for drastic changes in human activities, citing evidence that suggests fossil fuel use will not cause catastrophic warming, and stating that rising atmospheric carbon dioxide enhances plant growth, which will inevitably make more food available to the world’s poor.95

It is too early to determine whether Laudato Si will, in fact, make a difference to the creation care debate on either side, as the politicization of climate change remains a large part of the culture war between liberals and conservatives, regardless of religion. The Pope has, however, deliberately reached out to evangelicals since his election, formally and informally, to build unity between these two Christian traditions that have historic enmity.96 Rev. Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe, former secretary general of the WEA, noted that formal meetings with the Pope are often said to last only thirty minutes, but one informal meeting in Rome between the Pope and evangelical and charismatic leaders lasted over two hours.97 The Pope also spoke in a July, 2016, YouTube video greeting to thousands of millennials gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for Together 2016, an evangelical youth-focused prayer and worship gathering.98 In September, 2016, the Pope set up the “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation,” to be celebrated on


97 Ibid. The meeting took place June 10, 2016 in Rome, and followed a pattern of outreach to evangelicals and pentecostals, as part of Pope Francis’ stated continuing commitment to Christian unity.

the first day of September annually in the Catholic Church. By doing so, the Catholic Church joined with other religious traditions in celebrating the day, including the Orthodox Church which initiated the day of prayer in 1989 under the leadership of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The World Evangelical Alliance and the World Council of Churches have all endorsed the day of prayer as well.

Hayhoe explains that caring about climate change is not inconsistent with being a Christian, evangelical or otherwise, “despite what polls say about our opinions.” With regard to the Pope’s message and outreach, she says:

Caring about climate change is not foreign to our values as human beings on this planet…That’s what the Pope is saying, that’s what the science says, and that’s what the Bible tells us too. So, will the Pope’s encyclical affect evangelicals? For those who place their politics and ideology before their faith, it will not change many minds…the roots of climate denial lie in our ideology rather than our faith. But for any who take the Bible seriously, it must change minds. The encyclical is not proposing any new doctrine; it is not preaching any new message. It is simply reminding us that at the foundation of Christianity is one simple word: LOVE.

The Lausanne Movement also expressed gratitude for the encyclical:

We evangelicals will be eagerly reading ‘over the shoulders,’ so to speak, of the world’s 1.2 billion Catholics to whom the letter is addressed…While there are small marginal groups within evangelical Christianity who are often quoted in the press in opposition to climate change action, almost all major global evangelical

---


101 Ibid.
bodies including the Lausanne Movement have declared their commitment to care for God’s creation and to serve the poor affected by climate change impacts.102

Millennial evangelicals, such as those who are attracted to YECA and the burgeoning number of other creation care youth groups are perhaps the most significant indicator that creation care will continue to make inroads in legislation and policy that are protective of the environment. After the ECI campaign failed to garner the support that progressive evangelical leaders had hoped for in 2006, they realized they needed widespread, on-the-ground activism. “We did not have a strong grassroots movement,” according to Hescox.103 Campaign leaders have since increased outreach efforts, and Hescox says that EEN now has “captured over three million people who have taken action on climate change and clean energy from the evangelical and pro-life community.”104 Hescox, like Cizik and many other leaders, believes that young Christians are key to the growth and sustainability of creation care, and that they will not be dissuaded from their mission: “We are willing to vote for people who are willing to take action on climate,” says YECA’s twenty-six year old spokesperson, Rachel Lamb.105 By starting from a Christian foundation, Lamb says, the organization is able to visit campuses, such as Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma, unlikely to host traditional environmental groups. They


104 Mitch Hescox, telephone interview with author, September 16, 2016.

105 Root, “An Evangelical Movement Takes On Climate Change.”
believe that if they can get Christian young people on the side of environmentalism, then conservative leaders will have no choice but to listen. Houghton’s sustainability coordinator, Webb, says that this type of approach, of creating a safe space to talk about environmentalism, has had measurable success in reaching millennial evangelicals on the Houghton campus: “The research around messaging about climate change shows that you can't frame it in a way that people feel they have to change their identity and join a group they don't belong to. If you paint it as a natural part of something that you do belong to because this is part of our faith and heritage, then it's not so offensive and in your face…” When Hayhoe came to lecture on campus, Webb “used pre- and post surveys to gauge whether her lecture was effective at influencing the students’ views on climate change…there was a strong and measurable influence towards pro-climate beliefs on the part of students,” subsequent to her lecture framing the issue as part of biblically-inspired stewardship.

The posture of young evangelicals has shifted from the focus of their forefathers, and they may be redefining what a conservative Christian is, at least within the context of environmentalism. The postmillennial stance that grew out of Falwell’s accommodation to the public square has come to fruition in millennials, many of whom want to take swift action on what they see as the moral imperative of climate change without worrying about how it might look to others. Foster of Messiah College has witnessed what he be-

---

106 Ibid.


108 Ibid.
believes is a “philosophical difference” in the millennial generation he teaches, which he says is critical. While he believes creation care may be in a bit of a “stall” institutionally at evangelical schools teaching the next generation, he admits the following:

I’ve never seen a generation of students like the millennials who more want to do something immediately. They can learn the philosophy later. It’s vital for them to survive…they must learn to ignore ninety-nine percent of the information that comes to them every day. Scaring someone (about climate change) doesn’t help and doesn't have resonance. People must have hope and believe they can do something, if not to turn it around and get us back to Eden, then to mitigate and do as well as we can.109

YECA director Meyaard-Schaap believes that for millennial evangelicals, issues of social justice are paramount, and that the Moral Majority’s way of doing things “falls on deaf ears for our generation.”110 While they seek to influence environmental politics, their fundamental commitment is faithfulness to God’s word, and they are willing to work with anyone in fulfilling that moral obligation. Fikes believes that young evangelicals are the critical component for legislation and policies motivated by a creation care ethic:

I personally do think that there is still an opportunity and potential for American evangelicals to have a positive impact on legislation and policies that would be motivated by a creation care ethic. The reason I believe this is because of younger American evangelicals and also to a lesser extent, minority evangelicals, who are more open to supporting environmental issues that the past evangelical (white Anglo older generations) voting block has not been open to because they viewed this as a “liberal” issue….Younger evangelicals are much more inclined to have different views on many issues because they are not only better informed and but they are very interested in social justice issues, and environmentalism falls in this category. They are also more in tune with how past generations have not taken precautions with taking care of the planet; they they trust the science that indi-

109 David Foster, telephone interview by author, October 23, 2016.
110 Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, telephone interview by author, November 15, 2016.
cates climate change is happening and they see the huge benefit of renewal energy, etc.\textsuperscript{111}

The disaffection of evangelical youth can be traced in some respects to their dissatisfaction with the way that civic engagement has been treated by churches as a whole. Pastor Hunter was startled to hear young people in his congregation tell him that creation care was the first “relevant” thing that the church had focused on.\textsuperscript{112} Meynard-Schaap believes that “there’s a kind of renaissance in the Christian church among our generation that’s seeking to relearn what it means to be a Christian in the public square, and what it means to bring gospel to bear for the life of the world in a way that's not just about moralism but about justice and human flourishing.”\textsuperscript{113} It is no longer enough to have a narrow interpretation of moral Christianity as a framework for equally narrow defined policy objectives that are based in traditional understandings of liberal or conservative. “We are the first generation to have the world in our pocket…and we want to see a more robust ethic rooted in social justice and a concern for the things we're seeing around the world….Creation care, particularly climate change, is one way that really resonates in that regard.”\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{111} Deborah Fikes email with author, August 23, 2016.

\textsuperscript{112} Joel Hunter, telephone interview by author, August 31, 2016.

\textsuperscript{113} Kyle Meynard-Schaap, telephone interview by author, November 15, 2016.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
CONCLUSION

This thesis documents compelling evidence of a premillennial to postmillennial shift occurring within a large segment of the evangelical population in the United States, which is transforming how evangelicals view their relationship with the natural environment. This shift in the direction of “creation care” is causing three things to happen: first, it is redefining what being evangelical means within the context of the natural world, especially with regard to perceived Biblical mandates about environmental justice and natural resource protection. Second, it is helping to move forward policies and legislation that are protective of the environment in the United States, due to the influence of evangelical activists at local, state and Federal levels. Third, it appears to be pulling in evangelicals in increasing numbers who have not traditionally been part of the progressive social justice-oriented wing of evangelicals, such as the Southern Baptists, who have become increasingly open to an environmental stewardship ethic.

From a human values perspective, the shift away from premillennialism and towards postmillennial belief is indicative of a change in evangelical religious values based upon scriptural (re)interpretations, from Genesis through Revelation, and theological arguments regarding humankind’s role within the natural environment. Consequently, evangelical moral and ethical perspectives are evolving in a way which makes environ-

---

1 This thesis examined the National Association of Evangelicals and the Southern Baptists as case studies.

2 Passages from Genesis through Revelation are part of the hermeneutic dialogue. Some of the most cited include: Genesis 1-3, 6, 9; Leviticus 25:3-5; Deuteronomy 10:14; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Job 38; Psalm 1, 19, 24, 65, 96, 104; Isaiah 11, 24, 35, 40, 42, 55, 65; Jeremiah 4; Hosea 4; Matthew 6; Mark 4; John 1, 4, 15; Romans 8; Ephesians 1; Colossians 1; 1 Corinthians 8; 2 Corinthians 5; 1 John 4; Revelation 4, 21, 22. (Specific passages from the New Revised Standard Version may be found in the Appendix).
mental protection and conservation a central part of what God is calling believers to do during their time on Earth, including taking action at the personal and institutional levels. Brian Webb reiterated what Rich Cizik, Jonathan Merritt and dozens of other evangelical creation care leaders and laypersons have also said when he declared, “The time for silence on climate change within the church has passed. No longer a simply political or even a scientific issue, climate change is now a moral imperative that the church must respond to.” The premillennial view is that Christ will return before the millennial age, after the world has experienced the great tribulation and the appearance of the anti-Christ. Traditionally, this perspective has included a literal dominion-based interpretation of Scripture, in which God created the earth and its abundant resources exclusively for man’s use with no limiting factors, as illustrated in Genesis 1:28, “God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’” Conversely, the postmillennial view is that the present era is clearing the way for a golden age of one thousand years in which the gospel will be spread worldwide, and that Christ will return after this millennial age. The postmillennial perspective holds that humankind is responsible for preparing the world for Christ’s return, and creation care adherents believe that part of this responsibility includes ensuring that the natural environment, as part of God’s creation, is safeguarded and not destroyed.

---


4 Genesis 1:28, NRSV. Italics are author’s for emphasis.
The postmillennialist interpretation of the words *dominion* and *subdue* is based in stewardship, in which humans have been chosen and commanded by God to be caretakers of Creation, not exploiters:

Biblically, the prophetic voice calls people to account for God’s standards. Creation care calls the church and all believers, including policymakers, to stand up for the fact that God created this planet as a sustainable place…We have not lived sustainably or used resources wisely. We have trashed the planet…and now we're called to account now to change our ways to build better future. The real model for that is the story of Jesus' resurrection, coming back to the garden…Jesus will come back to restore and renew this creation and rebuild it as designed. He is asking us ‘are you going to build this kingdom and ready it for my return’?5

Evangelical stewardship requires that people be transformed in their beliefs and behaviors towards the Earth in order to live according to God’s word. Stewardship has become an article of faith for creation care advocates, resulting in increasing support of environmental justice movements as part of the social gospel, as well as protection of “living things both small and great.”6 Spreading the Word is no longer just about saving souls, it is about saving lives by helping “the least of these,” encompassing people worldwide who are suffering because of the effects of environmental degradation, such as polluted air and water, loss of arable land, and disease.7 It is also resulting in political action regarding climate change mitigation, including, for example, navigating the consequences of CO2 limits on developing nations whose populations depend upon fossil fu-

---

5 Mitch Hescox, telephone interview by author, September 16, 2016.

6 Psalm 104:24-25, NRSV text: “O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.”

7 Matthew 25:40, NRSV text: “And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’”
els. This action extends into the international sphere for reasons that are no longer just political:

What is most remarkable to me is that the global evangelical community spoke with a strong voice at a COP meeting for the first time, and that government delegations listened to us and to the other faith communities. Because of this, the climate conversation has permanently shifted from merely economics and politics to include morality.8

Increasingly, proponents of creation care at all levels are not defined by political ideology, but by practice. The idea of stewardship appears to be becoming especially entrenched with younger evangelicals, representing the next generation of lawmakers, business leaders and clergy, who are actively experiencing institutionalized creation care efforts on college campuses and in seminaries through academic programs and curricula, recycling, organic gardens, and facilities management. Evangelical scientists such as Katharine Hayhoe, are making inroads with evangelical youth who do not appear to be as science-averse as their elders, and therefore are more open to scientific evidence supporting claims of anthropocentric climate change. These young people have also grown up in a time where recycling, electric/hybrid vehicles, alternative energy and organic foods are considered a normal part of life, so the idea of creation care is not an alien concept. Organizations such as YECA, Restoring Eden, A Rocha, Care of Creation, Climate Caretakers and Blessed Earth are attracting more evangelical followers of all ages, and are actively involved in environmental efforts around the country from grassroots local and state levels, to grassroots Congressional lobbying efforts. YECA is experiencing explosive growth

and has become the representative voice of young creation care activists, expanding from twelve students in 2012 to more than eleven thousand at the end of 2016, and is becoming increasingly politically active.⁹ Many more of these types of organizations are involved in efforts that are never quantified or collated, but are nevertheless highly effective in supporting environmental protection and conservation at local community levels.¹⁰ EEN, the most active creation care lobbying organization, has made measurable progress in legislative initiatives that increase environmental protection at local, state and Federal levels, often partnering with other religious and secular organizations to move environmental policies and legislation forward. There is also increasing evidence that churches are engaging in creation care efforts, for reasons that are both scriptural and economic, as they work to green their institutions, often with the help of government incentives. These efforts indicate that creation care is no longer just an idea of evangelical elites, but is being adopted at all levels.

This thesis has given voice to the postmillennial transformation occurring within the evangelical community in the direction of environmental stewardship. It illustrates what is ultimately a moral debate reflecting ongoing discussion about who evangelicals believe they are and what ought they do from a faith standpoint. The implication of this evolution in evangelical thought and faith on the larger picture of human values is potentially enormous. In addition, this thesis has a normative dimension of illuminating critical

---

⁹ Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, telephone interview by author, September 15, 2016.

¹⁰ Author interviews with creation care activists revealed that activism at state and local levels is burgeoning, but that there is no tracking mechanism or database that collects information on who is doing what. Word of mouth and unofficial collaborations appear to be the only means of collecting this type of information.
ethical choices in the world because it fundamentally deals with a world religious community engaged in this type of reflection. More practically, this thesis will hopefully offer a contribution to the growing body of academic knowledge in the area of evangelical environmentalism, and assist interested individuals and groups in making informed, moral and ethical choices in terms of their relationships with the natural environment.
APPENDIX

Selected Creation Care Bible Verses (New Revised Standard Version)

First Testament

**Genesis 1:1-2** In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

**Genesis 1:3-5** Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

**Genesis 1:6-8** And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

**Genesis 1:9-13** And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

**Genesis 1:14-19** And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights--the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night--and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

**Genesis 1:20-23** And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters
swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

**Genesis 1:24-25** And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

**Genesis 1:26** Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

**Genesis 1:27** So God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

**Genesis 1:28** God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

**Genesis 2:2-3** And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

**Genesis 2:7** then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

**Genesis 2:15** The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

**Genesis 2:19** So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the human to see what he would call them; and whatever the human called every living creature, that was its name.

**Genesis 3:19** By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

**Genesis 6:19-20** And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds ac-
according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive.

**Genesis 9:11-13** I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

**Leviticus 25:3-5** Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the LORD: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land.

**Deuteronomy 10:14** Heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the LORD your God, the earth with all that is in it.

**1 Chronicles 29:11** Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.

**Job 38:1-7** Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements — surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together praise."

**Job 38:25-27** "Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground put forth grass?"

**Job 38:28-30** "Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven? The waters become hard like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen."

**Psalm 1:3** They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.
Psalm 19:1-4 The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Psalm 24:1-2 The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.

Psalm 65:5-13 By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas. By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might. You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples. Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy. You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Psalm 96:11-12 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

Psalm 104:1-6 Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent, you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers. You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken. You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.

Psalm 104:14-21 You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart. The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in the fir trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the conies. You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.
Psalm 104:24-30 O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

Isaiah 11:1-2 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Isaiah 11:6-9 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 24:3-6 The earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly despoiled; for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled, and few people are left.

Isaiah 35:1-2 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

Isaiah 40:12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?

Isaiah 42:5 Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:
**Isaiah 42:9-10** See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth! Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants.

**Isaiah 55:12** For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

**Isaiah 65:17-19** For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress

**Isaiah 65:21-25** They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent-- its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

**Jeremiah 4:23-26** I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and lo, there was no one at all, and all the birds of the air had fled. I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger.

**Hosea 4:3** Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing.

**Second Testament**

**Matthew 6:26-29** "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to your life's span? And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these."

252
Matthew 25:31-46 31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,[a] you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Mark 4:3-8 "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

Mark 4:30-32 He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

John 4:13-14 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."
John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

Romans 8:22-23 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Ephesians 1:8-10 With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Colossians 1:15-16 Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or rulers or powers-- all things have been created through him and for him.

Colossians 1:19-20 For in Jesus all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

1 Corinthians 8:6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

2 Corinthians 5:17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

1 John 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Revelation 21:1-5 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning
and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

**Revelation 22:1-2** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Journal Articles


**Online Resources**


**Theses and Dissertations**