Interpreting the Eleventh Commandment: A Look at Creation Care and Its Role in American Politics

A thesis submitted to the Miami University Honors and Scholars Program and the Department of Comparative Religion in partial fulfillment of the requirements for University Honors with Distinction and Departmental Honors

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May 2008
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio
ABSTRACT

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Often when words like “Evangelical” and “global climate change” are found in the same sentence, they are accompanied with words like “hoax” or “liberal.” This thesis explores the involvement of Evangelical Christians in the ongoing public discourse about the negative consequences of human action towards the environment. A growing number of Evangelicals—a demographic that voted George W. Bush into office by a margin of four to one—are speaking out in favor of environmental protection. Human-induced global climate change is posited as an issue of immediate concern to this growing movement which has come to be known as Creation Care.

Environmental protection is an issue historically not associated with Evangelical concerns, a position acknowledged by many Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals alike. Several statements regarding the environment have been made by various Evangelical organizations and coalitions from 1970 to the present. When analyzing these statements, a trend emerges: as time passes, the statements move away from simple platitudes and skepticism of environmentalism to a more complex position that both embraces environmental stewardship as a Christian duty and challenges the assumptions of what it means to be a conservative Evangelical in America today. Despite this trend, the Creation Care movement is not without critics from within the Evangelical community. The Interfaith Stewardship Alliance, directed by E. Calvin Beisner, has proved its most formidable foe. This thesis argues that this contention is more political than it is theological and that both sides justify their claims by employing familiar frames that resonate with Evangelical voters.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this project would not have been possible without the continued support of several individuals from the Miami University community and elsewhere. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Peter Williams, Distinguished Professor of Comparative Religion and Acting Director of the American Studies Program at Miami University, for his insight and willingness to offer guidance and feedback. I would also like to thank Dr. John Forren, Associate Director of Curriculum and Co-Curriculum for the University Honors and Scholars Program and Adjunct Associate Professor of Political Science along with Dr. Jim Hanges, Associate Professor of Comparative Religion for agreeing to be readers. The Miami University Dean’s Scholar program also deserves my gratitude for funding this research as does Mary Denney, Program Associate for the Department of Comparative Religion, for her patience as I figured out how to spend said funds.

Finally, I would like to recognize the continued love and support of my parents, Jeff and Jodi, and younger brother, Noah. Lastly, no page of thanks would be complete without recognizing two people near and dear to my heart—Sam and Megan. All of these individuals have seen me—and this project—at its worst and at its best. To you, I am eternally grateful.

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For Mr. Stitz
The beat goes on...
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Introduction

Richard Cizik calls himself a pro-life, pro-Bush, anti-gay marriage, green Evangelical.¹ Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) calls him a “liberal wolf in sheep’s clothing.”² While certainly not a “liberal,” Cizik is a bit of an anomaly. It is the last adjective in Cizik’s description that has Senator Inhofe, an Evangelical Christian himself, on the defensive. Cizik, the Vice President for Governmental Affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, is one of a growing number of conservative Evangelical Protestants who see global climate change and the negative consequences of human action on the environment as an issue that must be addressed by Christians and politicians alike.

Conservative Evangelicals have long played a key role in the political process of the United States. Given the media attention and political clout entertained in recent decades, the voice of conservative Evangelicals will be heard in the national political arena regarding climate change and other environmental concerns. Yet, which voice within this camp will be the loudest? Despite this growing movement, which Cizik and his colleagues call “Creation Care,” there remain several obstacles standing in the way of making this initiative a viable force for political reform. These challenges include: 1) 

convincing fellow conservative Evangelicals of their “Christian duty” to address climate change; 2) identifying acceptable “bed-fellows” in their push to influence American politics; and 3) re-assessing voting habits along party lines in light of this commitment to care for creation. Despite these challenges, conservative Evangelicals remain capable of influencing politicians in ways that have proved unsuccessful for other religious and environmental lobbies.

Religious responses to environmental concerns are not a new phenomenon. Biblically inspired language has been used in conservation efforts since the days of John Muir. In his *Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, Muir laments about the shortsightedness of those humans who see themselves as above God’s Creation rather than a part of it. Walter C. Lowdermilk, Assistant Chief of the Soil Conservation Service during the 1920s and 1930s did the same, arguing the nation had a God-given obligation, for physical and spiritual reasons alike, to take care of the land. If Moses had received the commandments during the 1930s, Lowdermilk continued, God would have included an eleventh commandment: “Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward...” While Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, and Lowdermilk represent conservationists’ views couched in religious terms, religious leaders and institutions throughout the 20th and 21st centuries have picked up on this call to environmental protection. These theologically motivated voices began in earnest during the 1970s as the American environmental movement took

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shape. At that time mainline Protestants spearheaded efforts within the Christian community. Though Evangelicals have joined this chorus in recent years, the involvement of conservative Evangelicals like Cizik creates a conundrum for present-day political affiliations.

Throughout this thesis, the term “Evangelical” is used frequently. For our purposes, the term will be used to describe individuals and organizations that consider themselves to be conservative Protestants and that often define themselves by employing three theological presuppositions: biblical authority, personal conversion, and a missionary zeal to bring others “to Christ.” Such a definition is intentionally broad and is akin to the description used by Randall Balmer in his work, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America (3rd Edition).* For our purposes, the term “Evangelical” will be used often as shorthand for “conservative Evangelical” and will refer to white Protestants who espouse the theological tenets and the political and social conservatism described above. Unfortunately, the scope of this research does not explore in depth the relationship between black Protestants and environmental advocacy. However, the intersections between Evangelicalism, race, socio-economic status, and environmental concerns should be explored in a future study.

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7 Ibid., 182.

8 Balmer, Randall, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture, 3rd Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), xviii. It is significant to note there are a growing number who identify with the Religious Left, especially following the 2004 presidential election. However, it is clear that this sub-group remains a minority, as only seven-percent of white Evangelicals identified themselves with the Religious Left in 2006, compared to twenty-percent who identified with the Religious
With political involvement that began in earnest with the rise of the new Religious Right in the early 1970s, Evangelicals continue to constitute a large portion of the Republican party voting base. As Cizik notes, the National Association of Evangelicals membership roll breaks down to include fifty-nine denominations, that is roughly 45,000 churches, and 30 million individuals within the United States. These are the “value voters” political candidates strive to win over during election season. Some know better than others how to play that game; Evangelical Christians voted in favor of George W. Bush in 2004 by a margin of 4 to 1. While Cizik considers himself a part of that camp, he is not pleased with the current Bush administration’s environmental record.

This thesis explores the intersection of religion, politics, and environmental action within the United States. Specifically, we will look at competing conservative Evangelical responses to global climate change to analyze the ways in which caring for Creation provides a vehicle for a growing number of conservative Evangelicals to challenge the assumption that their values are those of the Republican party. At the same time, we will see that these individuals are maintaining the historical skepticism towards Right.

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11 Ibid., (aired October 6, 2006).

12 Barbara Bradley Hagerty, “Evangelical Leaders Urge Action on Climate Change,” *Morning
science and secularism that characterizes Evangelicalism in general. Moreover, it is clear that those conservative Evangelical proponents for preserving and protecting the environment are using familiar theological and political frames to present pressing environmental concerns to their fellow Evangelical brethren. This thesis begins by presenting several reasons why preserving the environment has historically not been on the top of conservative Evangelicals to-do lists. In order to do this, we must take into account the developments that have brought American Evangelicalism to its present place. Our attention then turns to the current efforts by Richard Cizik, Calvin De Witt, and others within the Creation Care movement as they work to make salient issues of environmental concern. Finally, we delve into the potential role of conservative Evangelicals within the realm of environmental public policy and the obstacles Cizik and his colleagues face in upsetting current political divisions.

This is about how religious life understands itself and its purpose.
- Paul Gorman

Chapter 1: Barriers to Action

Correlate the words “conservative Evangelical” and “environmental concerns” positively in the same sentence and you will get more than one raised eyebrow. As Robert Booth Fowler notes, mainline Protestant denominations—and their umbrella organization, the National Council of Churches—have been highly involved in setting an ecological agenda since the early 1970s and in the 1990s and beyond with an apparent lull during the early 1980s. This conversation between the role of Western religions and environmental concerns was instigated by Lynn White’s article “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” which appeared in *Science* (1967). White, a professor of Medieval History, argued that Western Christianity set the tone for a relationship of dominion rather than harmony with the Earth, a worldview that led us to our current environmental crisis.

Evangelical involvement in acknowledging environmental concerns began to arise during the 1980s—more than a decade later than their mainline contemporaries. Fowler

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4 Robert Booth Fowler, *The Greening of Protestant Thought* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 39. The National Association of Evangelicals released several documents addressing environmental concerns during the 1970s, however these documents did not serve as a call to action for environmental stewardship. These documents also neglected to provide a foundation around which an official NAE call to action would coalesce and will be discussed at length in Chapter Two.
asserts that even when Evangelicals made pronouncements in favor of environmental stewardship, they differed only slightly from mainline responses. The difference? Evangelicals tailored their responses to the critics to their right—Christian fundamentalists.⁵ Despite these similarities, it is often surprising to learn that conservative Evangelicals have been and continue to take up the cause of environmental stewardship. The reasons for this surprise are steeped in theological, social, and political stances that have shaped Evangelicalism for the last century and a half.

Theologically-speaking, there are three major factors that historically have kept Evangelical voices silent if not dissident when it comes to taking action in favor of environmental initiatives. These include a theological disposition towards pre-millennialism, a focus on individual salvation, and the emphasis placed on a “dominion” rather than a “stewardship” approach to the environment. The propensity towards pre-millennialism has been a defining characteristic for many Evangelicals (and, more notably under that umbrella term, Fundamentalists) opposed to protecting the environment. According to a Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life poll taken in July 2006, 95 percent of white Evangelical Christians believe that Christ will return to earth again, 37 percent of which subscribe to a pre-millennialist view.⁶ Pre-millennialism asserts that the Second Coming of Jesus will happen prior to the millennium (or the thousand years of peace on earth) and will be characterized by great catastrophes and

upheavals. Essentially, the argument goes, the state of the world is going to get worse before it gets better. The focus then, is not on this world, per se, but in preparing oneself and others for the return of Christ. Such a view became popular in post-Civil War America as Evangelicals realized, in the words of Randall Balmer, “society was not improving, becoming more Christian; it was degenerating, falling into enemy hands.” Industrialization, urbanization, immigration, along with Darwin’s theory of natural selection and the rise in “higher criticism” of the Bible in intellectual circles contributed to this sense of loss. At the same time, many Evangelicals and Fundamentalists, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries espoused a post-millenialist view that meshed well with the doctrine of Manifest Destiny often used to describe the role of the United States. Post-millenialist views were instrumental in the crusade for Prohibition, which succeeded in 1917 with the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. This victory was a symbolic one for the continued hegemony of Protestantism within American culture at a time when such a status was threatened by concerns over urban centers, immigrants, and Darwinism, among others.

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10 Peter W. Williams, America’s Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 252.
11 Ibid., 253.
The disappointment accompanying the outcome of the Scopes Trial in 1925 and the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, both issues of social and political importance to Evangelicals, led to a retooling of the infrastructure of conservative Evangelicalism in America. While social issues continued to be addressed after the 1930s, more focus was turned inward, to building and sustaining a highly successful movement. Even with the resurgence of Evangelicals into mainstream society during the 1970s and the decades that followed, pre-millennialism remained a strong force throughout. This tension continues in the present in the work of Christian Right leaders like Tim LaHaye and the late Jerry Falwell who argue for the United States to fulfill a postmillennial view as a light in a “sinful” world while at the same time maintaining a pre-millennial eschatological outlook.  

Not surprisingly, care for the environment has often taken the back burner (or no burner at all) to more theologically pressing concerns such as the Lord’s imminent return. For some pre-millennialists environmentalism engenders something far greater than a waste of resources—it brings to light the possibility of a one-world government and the subsequent rule of the Anti-Christ foretold in biblical apocalyptic prophecy. With the mainstreaming of conservative Protestantism beginning with the Reagan administration, pre-millennialism played a significant role in pitting conservative Christians (and, more often, fundamentalists) against secular environmental efforts. Typified in what Fowler


calls the “James Watt controversy” of the early 1980s, it is clear that the skepticism of the environmentalism movement engendered by Protestant fundamentalists is a two-way street. James Watt served as the Secretary of the Interior under Ronald Reagan and in that capacity was known more for his pro-business conservation practices than for his care of the environment. The Audubon Society cited Watt as perhaps the most “anti-environmentalist secretary ever.” As Secretary of the Interior, Watt was known for selling oil and gas leases in wilderness areas, seeking to undermine governmental regulations in environmental protection, and attempting to eliminate the Land and Water Conservation Fund.\textsuperscript{14} Watt asserted to House of Representative about the environment: “I don’t know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns.”\textsuperscript{15} Given the elusive nature of the Lord’s return, the focus for many Evangelicals has been on saving souls rather than whales.

Evangelicalism has flourished in the United States in no small part to the ease in which its focus on personal religious experience merges with a cultural tendency towards individualism. As Balmer notes of the period following the American Revolution, Evangelical discourse shifted to focus more on individual choice regarding one’s own spiritual destiny; in short, “Evangelical theology had to adjust to a people intoxicated with self-determinism.”\textsuperscript{16} While Balmer notes that while, in the past century, Evangelicalism tended to define itself in a Manichean framework, it is clear that the role

\textsuperscript{15} Robert Booth Fowler, \textit{The Greening of Protestant Thought} (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 47.
of the individual salvation and high moral standards (both for self and society) remain important aspects of Evangelical life.\textsuperscript{17} This emphasis, coupled with the apocalyptic suspense of pre-millennialism, feeds a sense of urgency in the role of evangelism for many conservative Christians. In 1965, with increasing pressure on religious leaders and their congregations to become involved in the Civil Rights movement, Jerry Falwell proclaimed “preachers were not called to be politicians but soul winners.”\textsuperscript{18} This sentiment continues in many Protestant circles. Pimm and Van Houtan point to a 2004 poll conducted by \textit{Christianity Today} that found over half of its respondents were uneasy about environmentalism because other concerns such as a strong economy and “preventing earth-worship” took precedence.\textsuperscript{19} The rest of the respondents held that environmentalism was not a problem (25 percent of remaining) or doubted the Bible called for a stewardship approach.\textsuperscript{20}

While Falwell’s remarks about political disengagement may have served his political preferences during the 1960s more than he would have liked to admit, it is clear that Evangelicalism has been more concerned with overtly religious tasks such as

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 59.
\textsuperscript{18} Glenn H. Utter; John W. Storey, \textit{The Religious Right: A Reference Handbook} (OhioLink Electronic Book Center, accessed 4 January 2008), 4. Interestingly enough, less than ten years later Falwell, who became the leader of the Moral Majority and a major spokesman for the Religious Right, decried such a disengaged view as “invented by the Devil” and liberals to keep Christians from “running their own country.”

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Christianity Today} has become the most famous and most respected magazine of Evangelicalism. It was founded in 1956 as a conservative alternative to \textit{Christian Century}. (Source: Peter Williams, \textit{America’s Religions: From their Origins to the Twenty-First Century}, 387)
missionary work and “winning souls for Christ” than with addressing environmental concerns. Van Houtan and Pimm, whose work gauged the interest and actions of different religious denominations with relation to protecting species biodiversity, label this a “Priority Worldview.”\(^2\) Humans, as made in the image of God, clearly have first priority when it comes to spiritual and financial resources. In his response to Calvin DeWitt’s call for Creation Care—or an espousal of a stewardship view of Creation—, Congressman Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) warns against “environmental pantheism” that calls for humans to have “zero-impact” on our surroundings and to serve nature as god. Such a view is, according to Ehlers, fraught with serious consequences especially when contrasted with housing and tending for the poor.\(^2\) Ehlers, like many religious critics of environmentalism, cites as deterrents the emphasis placed on nature (or creation) rather than the Creator and on the tendency to strip humanity of what many believe is its place as the “crown of Creation.”

The Creation narratives found in the book of Genesis serve as both a boon and a curse when it comes to mobilizing Evangelicals to protect the environment. Many like Calvin DeWitt, Director of the Au Sable Institute, argue against the temptation to write off creation as a “lost cause” by using biblical language to demonstrate humanity’s role as stewards rather than dominators of creation.\(^2\) Adam and Eve’s decision to eat the

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\(^2\) The Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies “promotes a Christian environment stewardship through academic and community programs, retreats, and conferences” and is located in Michigan (Source: www.ausable.org/au.main.cfm)
forbidden fruit is just one example of humans pursuing their own self-interest, exercising dominion rather than stewardship, of creation, DeWitt argues. Conversely, God’s charge to Adam and his descendents to “serve and keep the garden” is an example of humanity’s proper relationship with creation (emphasis in original).²⁴ E. Calvin Beisner, a leading dominion theologian, perceives a different relationship between humanity and the rest of creation. ²⁵ Adam, he argues, was told to “subdue and rule” the earth in order to bring about its transformation into something better than its already existing goodness.²⁶ Humans, in order to sustain themselves, must transform the earth, a process that must be encouraged not condemned, according to Beisner, who opposes the romanticized view of nature as an all-sustaining presence as lauded by DeWitt and others.²⁷

Despite their clear disagreements, Dewitt and Beisner do agree on humanity’s role within creation insofar as humans hold a special place above all else. They, like Ehlers, oppose what they perceive as the prevailing notion of “environmental pantheism” within secular environmentalism. Caring for creation does not come at the expense of failing to worship the Creator but rather such care is a responsibility for those individuals and institutions that claim to follow Christ, DeWitt is quick to point out.²⁸

²⁵ E. Calvin Beisner is an associate professor at Knox Theological Seminary, adjunct fellow for the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, and founder of the Cornwall Alliance for Environmental Stewardship (formerly the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance) (Source: www.ecalvinbeisner.com, Accessed 17 January 2008).
²⁷ Ibid., 20.
charge by many fellow Evangelicals, green-minded leaders calling for action often distinguish between the stewardship model that gives glory to creation as the “handiwork of God” (known as Creation Care) and the worship of nature as a living being (known as the Gaia Hypothesis). Many Evangelicals (and Protestants more generally) are uncomfortable with the Gaia Hypothesis as it undermines the special role of humanity in God’s created order; Evangelical Francis Schaeffer laments that according to such a view, humanity is “no more than a blade of grass.”  

While Evangelicals (and others who ascribe to humanity a special place in the order of creation) may articulate such a view as biblically sanctioned and thus desirable, critics are quick to point out the possible link between “crown of creation” and “sower of disaster.” Let us return again briefly to Lynn White and his thesis that Western Christianity (and monotheism more generally) is responsible for the worsening state of the environment. White validates such culpability by pointing to Christianity’s emphasis on nature as subservient to and solely for man’s uses; a worldview that fueled the wedding of modern science (which began as “natural theology” during that time) and technology. In White’s assessment, Christianity in its Western form “is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen” and

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Man shares in great measure, God’s transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia’s religions (except perhaps Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit natures for his proper ends.\(^{31}\)

White’s perception of Western Christianity stands as a direct charge to dominion theology proponents like E. Calvin Beisner.

When it comes to discussing creation, many Evangelicals are reluctant to call themselves “environmentalists” or even “conservationists.” While many agree the world was created by God (often in the literal sense given in the Genesis account), far fewer are willing to come to creation’s defense, especially when such a pro-environment stance has been (and continues to be) perceived as secular at best and politically liberal at worst.\(^{32}\)

In the social sphere, American Evangelicals have been at odds with secular society since the late nineteenth and early 20\(^{th}\) century. This distrust is steeped in the several developments that put conservative Christians on the defensive, including the introduction of Darwinism and the teaching of evolution in public schools along with the push within intellectual circles for a “higher” biblical criticism.\(^{32}\) The argument over the proper response to such concerns split Protestantism into two camps: the liberals (or modernists) and the fundamentalists. The former saw the challenges of evolution and higher biblical criticism as positive developments. The latter saw such influences as detrimental and retreated from, rather than embraced, the mainstream political and social

scene. \textsuperscript{33}

The Scopes Trial in 1925 and the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 provided tangible evidence for conservative Christians and others that Protestant hegemony was eroding. Yet Christian Fundamentalists did not disappear completely from the political and social scene; they re-emerged post-World War II with a new enemy, Communism. The emergence of anti-Communist and distinctly Fundamentalist voices such as Carl McIntyre and Billy James Hargis fit squarely with the rising tide of McCarthyism during that era. \textsuperscript{34} Hargis’s assertion that fighting communism was “a part of [his] ordination vows, [his] creed” demonstrates the extent to which radical right-wing politics and Christian fundamentalism were interwoven into the fabric of the time. \textsuperscript{35} At the same time, conservative Evangelicalism was working to establish itself as distinct from mainline Protestantism in more moderate ways. Founded in 1942, the National Association of Evangelicals offered a conservative alternative to the National Council of Churches and the journal \textit{Christianity Today}, founded a little over a decade later, provided a respectable outlet for conservative Christians made squeamish by the


\textsuperscript{33} Peter Williams, \textit{America’s Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 254.

\textsuperscript{34} Glenn H. Utter; John W. Storey, \textit{The Religious Right: A Reference Handbook, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition} (OhioLink Electronic Book Center, accessed 4 January 2008), 5.

militancy promoted by fundamentalists.\footnote{Peter Williams, \textit{America’s Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 376.}

A larger resurgence of political involvement occurred during the 1970s with the rise of the New Religious Right (hereafter referred to as the Religious Right). Balmer points out that the counterculture of the 1960s, disgrace in Vietnam, and negative press generated by Watergate provided proof to many that America had indeed lost her moral way.\footnote{Randall Balmer, \textit{Blessed Assurance: A History of Evangelicalism in America} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 106.} Jimmy Carter’s bid for president of the United States drew many Evangelical voters into the political arena, yet Carter (a born-again Christian himself) was soon rejected for the security promised by Ronald Reagan’s successful campaign as President of the United States in 1980.\footnote{The great foe “liberalism” manifested itself in social issues rejected by this growing bloc of “value voters”; abortion, feminism (or the challenging of “traditional” gender roles), secularization of public schools, and homosexuality became rallying cries for all that was wrong with American society.

While many secular and even mainline Protestants engaged themselves in the budding environmentalism movement, most leaders within the Religious Right (and the politicians who sought the support of their constituencies) were calling for a return to America’s “Christian roots.” Tied into the omission of environmental concerns in the Evangelical agenda is an historic uneasiness between Evangelicalism and secular society as well as strong distaste for any topic that might legitimize Darwinism, a scientific worldview, or “secular humanism” over that of a religious one. With regard to this
uneasiness, Robert Booth Fowler acknowledges that, for many Christian fundamentalists, the environmental movement garners “no answers but rather is very much a part of the problems generated by modern liberalism.”\(^{39}\) Even in our present time, a recent Pew Forum study found that white Evangelicals, as a demographic group, are the most likely to hold an unfavorable view of the environmental movement. Forty percent of white Evangelicals hold an unfavorable view; the next closest demographic group is white mainline Protestants, 25 percent of which hold an unfavorable view.\(^{40}\) Given Lynn White’s thesis and the outcry following the James Watt controversy, it seems this distrust often runs both ways.

Despite these numerous challenges, there have been and continue to be several sizable efforts by conservative Evangelicals (and their more liberal brethren) to address issues of environmental concern. While the National Association of Evangelicals began publishing statements on the environments in the 1970s, the first notable foray by Evangelicals into political proceedings in favor of environmental protection came in the mid-1990s with the defense of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In October 1995, the Christian Environmental Council of the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) adopted a resolution urging Congress to strengthen the ESA, an act that left many wondering how Evangelical Christians and the Endangered Species Act got into the same sentence, according to Paul Gorman, founder of the National Religious Partnership for


the Environment. In addition to the National Partnership for the Environment—which promotes a shared vision of caring for creation from Jewish, Evangelical, Mainline, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox perspectives—, the Evangelical Environmental Network and the Au Sable Institute are the leading organizations promoting a culture of stewardship among Evangelicals and the general public. These organizations provide proof that there has been since the late 1980s a small but growing movement among Evangelicals to engage with environment issues while maintaining their theological and social conservatism. It appears some of their brethren are getting the message. As of July 2006, white Evangelicals were hearing about environmental concerns from the pulpit slightly more than white mainline Protestants (45 percent versus 42 percent) and about the same as Catholics. Despite this, Evangelicals are the least likely of any other religious demographic polled in the United States to believe that global warming is a serious threat or a human-induced problem. In lieu of such findings, one might ask what was being said about the environment from the pulpit.

More often than not, leaders on both sides of the Creation Care divide cite that environmentalism is still viewed by many Evangelicals as a “liberal” concern. As with the rise of the environmental movement during the 1960s, environmentalism continues to

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be viewed as “elitist and leftist.”44 The Reverend Richard Cizik, Chief Director of Governmental Affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, knows this charge all too well. Though a self-proclaimed “Reaganite” and “Bush supporter,” Cizik bore the brunt of a verbal attack in April 2006 from Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) who dismisses global warming as a “hoax.”45 Vehemently, Inhofe insisted Cizik was nothing more than a “liberal wolf in sheep’s clothing” and that there was no push within the Evangelical camp to further an agenda of political action to address climate change.46

Even proponents of Creation Care, the movement among Evangelicals to implement a concept of environmental stewardship, recognize this charge of liberal leanings. A recent Republican presidential hopeful, Mike Huckabee is just one of many conservative Christians who aimed to debunk the perception of liberals as the sole protectors of the environment. Huckabee argued for the Boy Scout Rule (“leave the campsite better than you found it”) in May 2007 debate, stating it was our God-given duty to protect the environment and attain energy independence for future generations.47 In his book From Hope to Higher Ground, Mike Huckabee reminds readers that “the very word conservative means that we are all about conserving things valuable and dear” and that, for him, we are not owners of this God-given treasure but “merely its

caretakers.**48** Conservatives were, after all, the first conservationists, he insists. Cizik, DeWitt, and Huckabee are clear examples of conservative Christians challenging the political status quo within the United States. Be it wrestling with the Republican Party to take notice of new conservative Christian concerns or attempting to weaken the stronghold liberals have on environmental issues, these struggles have not been and are not likely to become easy. In the next chapter, we will look closely at the debate among Evangelicals regarding environmental concerns and climate change more specifically. In doing so, we explore to what degree both theological and political concerns shape the direction and effectiveness of this discourse.

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**48** Mike Huckabee, *From Hope to Higher Ground* (New York: Center Street, 2007), 72-73.
To be biblically consistent, sometimes you have to be politically inconsistent.
- Reverend Richard Cizik

Chapter 2: Finding a Voice

What does the earth’s climate have in common with Evangelical Protestants who see caring for creation as biblically mandated? Their numbers are both on the rise. While Evangelical entry into the environmental debate has been a long time coming (especially when compared to mainline contemporaries), recent documents produced by Evangelical groups have acknowledged the need for action now. This chapter will outline the progression of Evangelical statements on the environment since the first document was published in 1970 until 2006. As we will see, each document produced becomes more and more politically charged and generates controversy among Evangelicals themselves. We will look at how these disputes often have more to do with politics than they do theology.

Robert Booth Fowler argues that Evangelical responses to environmental concerns look much like those of their mainline contemporaries. Indeed, both camps cite scripture and infuse their arguments with biblically inspired language. As Van Houtan and Pimm point out, without this use of theological language, Christian ethics would lose

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their intelligibility for most of its adherents. Words like “creation” and “stewardship” replace “nature” and “bio-centrism” in the works of mainline and Evangelical proponents of environmental protection as they argue for the “right relationship” between God, humanity, and the physical world.

While mainline and Evangelical responses may correspond to one another theologically, this is by no means admission of a broad consensus in either camp as to the extent or proper response to environmental concerns. This diversity can be seen in the work of Van Houtan and Pimm on species conservation. Van Houtan and Pimm break down Christian ethics towards species biodiversity into four different types of responses: earth-keeping, skeptic, priority, and indifferent. While their focus is on species preservation, they apply these four distinct worldviews to the diversity of Christian responses to broader environmental concerns. Earthkeeping is a worldview characterized by a commitment to stewardship of creation and its God-given resources. This approach is steeped in a biblical call to caring for creation as “stewards.” As of September 2005, the lion’s share of major Christian denominations (defined as having membership number greater than one-million) subscribed to an earthkeeping worldview. A skeptic worldview upholds concerns for environmental degradation but does not affirm human contributions as the main cause for such ills. If an organization or individual feels there are more

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4 Ibid., 124.
pressing issues to be dealt with, such as tending to the poor or saving souls, Van Houtan and Pimm call this a priority world view. Finally, the indifferent worldview is characterized by a lack of engagement with environmental concerns, either positively or negatively. Thus the line separating those concerned for the environment and those who are not is not drawn between Evangelicals and mainline Christians; rather, the line cuts across tradition and separates individuals and organizations by worldview.

When looking at both mainline and Evangelical pro-environment (or pro-Creation) statements several key justifications arise for taking such action. These include a strong emphasis on God as a Creator, worthy to be worshipped and nature as creation, not intended to be exalted above its Maker. Underlying this presupposition is the concern that environmentalism equates with pantheism, as noted in the previous chapter. After lauding the goodness of creation (even before humans arrived on the scene), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s “Basis for Our Caring” (1993) goes on to state that, though creation is very good, it is not God and “though creation has honor as the work of God, those who worship it exchange truth for a lie.” Likewise, many of the statements emphasize the right relationship between humanity and nature as being one of stewardship. “Creation and the Covenant of Caring” adopted by the American Baptist

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6 Ibid., 126-130

Churches USA in 1989 justifies this relationship by focusing on the word “stewardship” as a literal translation from a Greek word that refers to managing a household.⁸

Therefore, “we are all called to be managers of God’s household, the earth and all that is in it.”⁹ “The Evangelical Declaration on the Environment” (1993) gives support to the development of “just, free economies”; it also commits signatories to working for public policies that affirm stewardship, a commitment echoed by the statement made by the American Baptist Churches USA. ¹⁰

By acknowledging the need for public policy initiatives or by calling for individual and collective action on a community level in favor of stewardship, statements by both mainline and Evangelical Protestant groups recognize the devaluation of the creation as an individual and corporate “sin.” For our purposes we will look at how Evangelical statements over time have become more politically salient and thus more divisive among conservative Evangelicals. In comparing these statements with each other and with mainline documents, we get a glimpse at the challenges that arise from the decentralized system of power characteristic of Evangelical Protestantism. Also present in this internal struggle is the role of partisan politics and the potential backlash that comes when a group associates itself too closely with, in this case, the Republican Party. In short, the question of who speaks for Evangelicals will be a large part of our discussion.

⁹ Ibid., 210.
on the potency and legitimacy of Evangelical statements concerning the environment.

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), began making statements on the state of the environment during the 1970s; however it was not until the last two decades that these addresses carried much weight in terms of unified action in the form of political lobbying or widespread education. The first statement issued in 1970 entitled “Ecology” cites unchecked pollution, technology, and consumption as contributors to the crisis.\(^\text{11}\)\(^\text{12}\) Not only does such a crisis carry political, scientific, and biological implications, it is, at its root, a religious and theological issue, according to this initial statement. The call is made for Christians to exercise “stewardship” to fulfill the biblical commission to “subdue and replenish the earth.” Interestingly enough, in this statement the language of dominion theology and the stewardship model seem to be intertwined. While it is considered a sin to wantonly upset the natural balance God intended, the call to “subdue and replenish” does not seem to echo concern for one of the world’s most pressing ecological issues—the human population explosion. Contrast this statement with one of the many statements on ecology issued by the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1971, roughly the same time “Ecology” was released by the NAE. In the report “Concerning World Population Growth” the Disciples of Christ urged their congregations to “consider such matters as family planning, birth control,


\(^{12}\) “Ecology” and subsequent statements by the NAE along with the full text from other Evangelical organizations can be found in the Appendix.
adoption, and abortion as a part of a pressing need to curtail world population growth…”

The fact that “Ecology” continues with a commendation of Richard Nixon and organizations determined to “salvage our environment” lends weight to a more dominion-like translation of “stewardship” rather than an earthkeeping model. The statement affirms the return of Christ before man can completely destroy the world, while asserting the balance of creation must be restored so that future generations, like us, can “enjoy this world and make it fruitful” (emphasis added). Subduing nature is to re-instate the proper balance, according to this document. Nature alone is not lauded as fruitful—it is only with the help of humans that such equilibrium can be recognized. To waste resources is to sin against nature, not against ourselves as a part of it. In its final remarks, “Ecology” provides a glimpse of the widespread skepticism of environmentalism and its potential liberal and theological implications for conservative Christians.

The National Association of Evangelicals first statement on the environment concludes with a pledge to support “every legitimate effort” to maintain the natural balance of the world. Placing this statement within its historical context sets it in a time when federal environmental legislation was gathering momentum and offered politicians...
an alternative to radical anti-war sentiment. The 1970s saw concern for the environment as never before among the American public; a telling example is the expansion of individual involvement in environmental organization participation from 550,000 participants in 1970 to 2.5 million fifteen years later. The language of “legitimate efforts” takes on an administrative hue when steeped in the political and social context of the early 1970s.

This skepticism is reflected in a similar statement issued the following year entitled “Environment and Ecology” (1971). This declaration goes so far as to say that man’s multiplication and progress are the cause of the world’s environmental problems. At the same time, a statement highlighting the rashness of some groups and ineffectiveness of others follows this admission. While not calling citing organizations by name, the NAE considers the work of some organizations to lack a grounding in knowledge; others, while more responsible, have lacked public support. Citing Genesis 1:28 as a “cultural mandate”, “Environment and Ecology” again affirms the stewardship of creation as biblically-sanctioned, elucidated further by linking it to the Noahic covenant in Genesis 9:1 to “fill and subdue.” In closing, the 1971 statement goes on to sanction any “responsible effort” to rectify the pressing environmental problems, pledging to support “all proven solutions by competent authorities.” Initially, this

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16 Ibid., 252-3.
statement seems reasonable enough—scientists have been wrong before and organizations thrive on the vulnerability spawned by doomsday predictions. Yet, a closer reading seems to reveal a defensive posture rather than an offensive one. Again, skepticism prevails.

The next statement to emerge from the NAE did so in 1990. “Stewardship: All for God’s Glory” echoes sentiments similar to those of their predecessors. Coupled with the indictment that many abuse God’s creation for the amassing of wealth is the recognition that some conservation groups fail to understand “proper utilization” of the earth’s resources. This view will be taken up by E. Calvin Beisner, a leading critic of the Evangelical environmental movement, during the 1990s and beyond. A noteworthy addition to this particular NAE statement is a laundry list of social ills caused by the improper use of scientific and artistic talent. The list goes beyond the wanton destruction of the natural world to cite pornography, the development of ungodly philosophies, and the continual accumulation of wealth by the well to do as an equally harmful squandering of Creation. The document closes with a call to member Evangelical churches, organizations, missions, and individuals to reflect on their own performance as Christians called to be good stewards.

“Stewardship: All for God’s Glory” (1990) is the last public statement on environmental stewardship set forth by the National Association of Evangelicals alone.

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18 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.” (The Bible: New Revised Standard Translation)

Several collaborative Evangelical statements cropped up in the early 1990s through the present day and reflect a growing interest in environmental concerns from Evangelical circles since the late 1980s. During the nineteen-year lull between the last two NAE statements on the environment, several Evangelical initiatives were instituted outside of that organization. The Au Sable Institute became more than just a summer camp in Mancelona, Michigan—it became the hub for the Creation Care movement. Calvin DeWitt explains that, during the 1980s in the United States, there was a need to link Christian colleges and universities with opportunities to learn more about the earth and our responsibility to preserve it. DeWitt recalls

…there was emerging at that point in the Christian world in America a fairly strong movement most of it related to the Moral Majority, in which there was little identification with care and stewardship of Creation.\(^{20}\)

Au Sable’s commitment to making creation care a viable movement was rewarded after a 1992 joint summer forum with The World Evangelical Fellowship. Out of this meeting emerged the International Evangelical Environmental Network (IEEN) and its domestic counterpart, the Evangelical Environmental Network. The latter is under the auspices of Evangelicals for Social Action, a group directed by Ron Sider.\(^{21}\) The EEN made headlines soon after when it partnered with the Center for Environmental Information, a lobbying group that works closely with the World Wildlife Fund and the National Wildlife Federation, to prevent Congress from undercutting the Endangered Species


\(^{21}\) Ibid., 99.
Act.22 Out of this call to action came the 1994 “An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation” which was signed by hundreds of ministers, lay leaders, organizational representatives, and theologians.23

“An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation” is an in-depth analysis and affirmation of the need for stewardship of the earth, both in terms of spiritual and physical relationship. We again see a recognition that people, in search of spiritual meaning, are turning to non-Christian religions in order to answer these ecological concerns. This is met with a call to Christians to 1) repent of their devaluing actions towards creation; 2) resist ideologies that do not have Christ at the center of the solution to the ecological crisis as well as those who reduce the Gospel to nothing more than a guide for caring for creation; 3) learn about Creation and the Creator from the Bible; and 4) recognize what Creation teaches about God and the principles by which his order flows.24

While these four points may appear similar to ideas articulated in the National Association of Evangelicals’ statements, there are a few differences worth noting. First, the Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation (EDCC) asserts human beings are “shaped by the same processes and embedded in the same systems of physical, chemical, and biological interconnections which sustain other creations” while maintaining their

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24 Ibid., 224.
“unique responsibility for creation.” This last portion is in direct response to the “Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation” symposium held by the World Council of Churches (1990) in which many Christian leaders left feeling uneasy about the Council’s decision to “dethrone” humanity as the apex of creation. The Evangelical response came in 1994 with the EDCC. And yet, while the sense that individuals can only meet God fully through Scriptures and dimly through nature is still present, there is a willingness to see oneself as part of the whole of nature, rather than an outside actor affecting nature without being affected.

The EEN statement also recognizes that poverty exacerbates environmental degradations thus individuals are called to work for “just, free economies” in order to alleviate this burden. As E. Calvin Beisner and others point out, this vague assertion leaves much room for speculation when charting a course of concrete action. In addition, there is a missionary imperative present in this statement that is not present in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the American Baptist Churches statements (among others) issued around the same time. In short, working with others who are concerned about the environment is an evangelistic opportunity.

Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, Evangelical calls to address environmental issues have mounted—and so have their opposition. E. Calvin Beisner, an Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Covenant College, responded to the “An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation” with a book

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Where the Garden Meets Wilderness. Beisner does not discount the need for environmental stewardship, per se. Espousing a more dominion-like approach to stewardship, Beisner is an example of what Van Houtan and Pimm would consider a “skeptic worldview.” He challenges overarching two assumptions made by the Evangelical Environmental movement, namely the biblical justifications cited by leaders like Calvin DeWitt and Ron Sider for stewardship and the legitimacy of scientific data presented by vested players dominate his arguments. Theologically, the Declaration fails to recognize the difference between—and the proper human responses towards—the pristine nature of the Garden of Eden prelapsarian and the sinful state of the world postlapsarian. Prelapsarian, Adam was called to “till and to keep” but postlapsarian and after expulsion from the Garden, the relationship between man and the earth changed to become one of dominion and subordination.27 Beisner charges Calvin DeWitt and other proponents of Creation Care with perpetuating a false notion of a perfect garden as the natural state of the earth to which we must return. Despite the Declaration’s vagueness on the actual implementation of instilling “just, free economies,” Beisner counters this assertion, labeling the call for a sustainable economy as no doubt a call to reject the “product economies of the West,” as is the sentiment from secular environmentalists.28 Within its vagueness, Beisner is quick to point out biblical backing for individual ownership of resources—lest Christians be led to reject individualism by taking God’s

28 Ibid., 165.
“ultimate ownership” too literally.\textsuperscript{29}

In 2000 these tenets coalesced to form the basis of the “Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship,” the founding document of the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance.\textsuperscript{30} The ISA claims membership of Jews, Protestants, and Catholics and remains under the direction of E. Calvin Beisner. Emerging from this flagship statement and subsequent releases is concern over the economic well being of the earth’s poor. To mandate carbon emission cutbacks, for example, would be to inhibit the potential for economic prosperity of the world’s poorest nations. The “Cornwall Declaration” asserts that the mainstream environmental movement seeks to satiate the concerns of the wealthy environmentalists by purporting global crises such as human-caused global warming and species extinction rather than focusing on more local concerns such as adequate water sources and healthcare to the earth’s poorest people.\textsuperscript{31} In sum, a Christian response to environmental issues would place all people and their needs before those of the physical planet, according to Beisner.

In 2004 the “Sandy Cove Covenant” was signed by hundreds of Evangelical

\textsuperscript{29} E. Calvin Beisner, \textit{Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate}, (Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, 1997., 166.

\textsuperscript{30} The Interfaith Stewardship Alliance (now called the Cornwall Alliance for Stewardship of Creation) carries close ties with the Acton Institute, a think tank whose mission is to “promote a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles.” The legitimacy of the Institute’s work on environmental stewardship has often been criticized given its financial ties to ExxonMobil (Source: “Evangelicals and the Environment” \textit{Is God Green?}, DVD, documentary by Bill Moyers. PBS Moyers on America [Aired October 6, 2006]).

leaders from across the country.\textsuperscript{32} The Covenant affirmed the presence of creation care as a “permanent dimension” of Christian discipleship and issued a commitment on the part of the signatories to work together to educate themselves and their constituencies about the environmental crises and the most promising solutions presented in response to these issues. The need for such engagement reflects politically charged language no doubt intended to resonate with traditional “values voters.” Christians must ask these questions because of the implications environmental degradation has on the health of “families, and the unborn” along with the poor and “God’s endangered creatures.”\textsuperscript{33} Due to its increasing political clout, the ongoing debate about human-induced climate change also receives attention—with the pledge that an Evangelical consensus statement on the validity of such claims will be reached within the year. The “Sandy Cove Covenant” is the first of the Evangelical statements on the environment to acknowledge the debate about human-induced climate change. Politically, the “Sandy Cove Covenant” represents a challenge to the newly re-elected President George W. Bush and to Congress. George W. Bush has been criticized for his refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol limiting CO\textsubscript{2} emissions and for his delay in acknowledging significant changes in the earth’s climate as being human-induced.\textsuperscript{34} By stating that the signatories of the “Sandy Cove Covenant”

\textsuperscript{32} The “Sandy Cove Covenant” emerged out of a joint Creation Care conference sponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals, Christianity Today, and the Evangelical Environmental Network at the Sandy Cove Christian Conference Center in Maryland. It was adopted on 30 June 2004 (Source: National Association of Evangelicals, http://www.nae.net/index.cfm?FUSEACTION=editor.page&pageID=121,IDCategory=9, [accessed 16 February 2008]).

would come to a consensus on human-induced climate change within a year, its proponents (whose constituencies, lest we forget, were key players in the election and re-election of George W. Bush) are, in a sense, challenging the President and Congress to take a stand. As the first Evangelical statement to explicitly employ language of protecting “the unborn” or the health of families, the “Sandy Cove Covenant” speaks to the elected officials who use these terms to woo voters and to the “values voters” whose decisions often reflect religious or moral convictions opposing abortion and favoring traditional family structures.

Global warming hit the international scene as a potential environmental crisis in the 1980s, following on the heels of concern about possible “global freezing” during the 1970s. Since the 1980s, a growing bank of evidence points to humans as the primary reason for rising global temperatures; however, this concept has often been cast closer to theory than fact in the United States especially among federal government-influencing auto-makers and other pro-business interests. During the Clinton administration, this powerful lobby of oil, gas, coal, and auto-making companies, among others, succeeded in thwarting plans to raise fuel efficiency standards. The U.S. Senate also balked at reducing emissions when it voted 95-0 against signing any international treaty to curb carbon

34 President Bush only recently (September 2007) acknowledged that humans were ninety-percent likely to be the leading contributor to a rise in global temperatures. His admission comes late to the international table and his refusal to set mandatory limits on greenhouse gases emissions has caused much global concern. (Source: Alex Spillius, “Man is to Blame for Climate Change, US Admits,” Telegraph.co.uk, 15 September 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/main.jhtml?xml=/earth/2007/09/15/eacclimate115.xml)

emissions if it did not require developing nations to do the same.\footnote{Ted Steinberg, \textit{Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 276.} Yet since 1990 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released four Assessment Reports articulating increasing evidence that human activity is a primary cause of the earth’s rising temperatures. The most recent Report (AR4), released in 2007, is the most straightforward in linking the actions of humans to increasing global temperatures:

Most of the observed increase in globally-averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic [greenhouse gas] concentrations. This is an advance since the [Third Assessment Report]’s conclusion that “most of the observed warming over the last 50 years is likely to have been due to the increase in [greenhouse gas] concentrations…”\footnote{Ted Steinberg, \textit{Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 276.} (emphasis in original)

Public interest in the debate over human-induced climate change, like global temperatures, continues to rise. Along with the IPCC reports, Al Gore’s documentary \textit{An Inconvenient Truth}, along with a book of the same title, has helped raise public consciousness—and debate—about global warming. Released in 2006, \textit{An Inconvenient Truth} brings to light the consequences the earth and its people are already undergoing because of rising temperatures. With the furious arrival of Hurricane Katrina less than a year before, Gore’s message hit home for many Americans on both sides of the political spectrum.

The most recent and most controversial Evangelical statement was released in February 2006, the promised consensus statement on human-induced climate change. “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action” was signed by more than eighty prominent Evangelical leaders. The statement takes a definitive stand on the reality of
human-induced climate change and the need for individual and collective action to slow, stop, and reverse the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. Four claims are cited and defended as the basis for this assertion: 1) Overwhelming scientific evidence points to climate change as a real and present threat to the stability of the earth; 2) The poor will be the hardest hit from global climate change; 3) Christians are biblically-called to love God and neighbor and to be exercise good stewardship; 4) Governments, churches, corporations, and individuals must act now.38

The “Call to Action” sets this response within the context of prior Evangelical engagement in issues protecting the sanctity of human life, while recognizing the importance of addressing any issue that threatens God’s creation—human and otherwise. While firmly acknowledging the existence of and need to address climate change, the Evangelical Climate Initiative recognizes the arduous process to get to a point of consensus. Interestingly enough given decades of distrust towards science, scientific evidence is heralded as the hinge upon which all other arguments in favor of action rest. Also prominent in this assertion is that fact that Sir John Houghton, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change from 1988 to 2002, is a fellow Evangelical Christian.39 This insertion legitimizes Evangelical involvement by giving the scientific evidence a trustworthy source. The Evangelical Climate Initiative provides on its official website the questions posed by the United States Senate to Sir John Houghton following

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his testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on July 21, 2005 along with his responses. As a prelude to this text the ECI notes: “It is comforting to know that we have a senior scientist who is also a devout Christian who can answer such questions with authority.” The Reverend Richard Cizik, Vice President of Governmental Affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, expresses a similar sentiment when he described to Bill Moyers “two conversions” in his life: the first where he accepted Jesus Christ as his savior and the second, decades later, when he accepted the evidence posed to him about human-induced climate change. His introduction to climate change came from conversations with Sir John Houghton. It was Houghton’s religious convictions that led Cizik to trust his scientific credentials.

In addition to the “Call to Action,” the Evangelical Climate Initiative followed up with trips to Washington, D.C. to meet with Congressional representatives and with a two-page document outlining “Principles for Federal Policy on Climate Change.” The ten principles offered do not fall squarely along political party lines, causing more than a little stir from conservative Evangelical brethren. For example, the role of states and businesses in curbing global warming is lauded because action is best when at the lowest possible organization level. At the same time, federal standards are seen as a necessary evil given the scope of climate change. Energy independence is couched as a national

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41 “Evangelicals and the Environment” Is God Green?, DVD, documentary by Bill Moyers. PBS Moyers on America (aired October 6, 2006).
security concern as well as an opportunity to strengthen our domestic market. In order to ensure the market reflects such priorities, the “Principles” call on the federal government to implement long and short-term incentives for corporations that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The need to provide domestic and international programs that aid the poor in escaping the effects of global warming is coupled with the need to protect the property rights of all people from infringement by pollution, undeserved financial burdens, or destruction of resources. While “A Call to Action” applauded President George W. Bush for recognizing climate change and the likelihood that human action has contributed, “Principles” calls for the upholding of a Framework Convention on Climate Change treaty signed by then-President George H.W. Bush and ratified by the Senate that calls for a “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations” at a low enough level to prevent human-caused changes in global climate. Even more bold is the assertion that the United States should take the lead in creating technologies to reduce global warming—even if entails acting before China and India in this arena. Such an assertion cuts to the quick of George W. Bush’s main argument against signing the Kyoto Protocol.

Fury over “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action” did not take long to mount into a tangible attack with E. Calvin Beisner at the helm. Beisner and twenty-two

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43 Ibid., (accessed 17 February 2008).
44 Ibid., (accessed 17 February 2008).
45 Bill Moyers interviewed E. Calvin Beisner for the 2006 documentary “Is God Green?” Two days before the documentary aired Beisner released a statement in the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance Newsletter accusing Moyers of, prior to their interview, acknowledging himself to be a liberal and attempting to divide Evangelical voters in order to hand the November 2006 mid-term elections over to the Democrats. Moyers and his camera crew denied these statements and demanded Beisner publicly retract his statement with an apology. Beisner refused. For more information about this exchange, see Beisner’s statement in the ISA newsletter and Bill Moyer’s follow-up e-mail and letter to Beisner in the Appendix.
Evangelical leaders such as James Dobson, Founder of Focus on the Family, and Charles W. Colson, Founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries, pre-empted the release of “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action” with a letter to the National Association of Evangelicals. The letter urged the National Association of Evangelicals not to sign the “Call to Action” because the legitimacy of global warming claims was not a consensus issue among Evangelicals. Then President of the NAE, Reverend Ted Haggard did not sign the “Call to Action” and neither did the Reverend Richard Cizik despite his recruitment of other Evangelical leaders to be signatories. Calvin DeWitt lamented this retreat by the NAE, saying

A year ago, it looked as though Evangelicals would become a strong, collective voice for what we call 'Creation care' and others may call environmentalism," he said. "This will have negative consequences for the ability of Evangelicals to influence the White House, unfortunately and sadly.

Despite not signing the “Call to Action,” Haggard admitted in a phone interview with the New York Times that, for him personally, there was no doubt in his mind “that climate change was happening” and “it would be wise for us to stop doing the foolish things we're doing that could potentially be causing this.”

After the release of “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” the

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Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation (formerly the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance) released an open letter to the signers of the “Call to Action” along with a detailed report that attempted to systematically thwart the four main arguments of the “Call to Action.” In its opening lines, the Cornwall Alliance’s “Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming” affirms that its proponents share “the same Biblical worldview, theology, and ethics” as members of the Evangelical Climate Initiative. The Alliance’s statement goes on to argue that scientific studies on anthropogenic causes of global warming lack consensus and the impact rising global temperatures will have on the poor is far outweighed by the negative consequences for that demographic if regulations were set in place to significantly reduce the use of fossil fuels. Reducing energy consumption will drive up prices and drive down production, making it impossible for the poor to ever have a chance to gain wealth; thus the market should be left to decide the “cost effectiveness” of energy consumption rather than politicians and bureaucrats. The Cornwall Alliance’s solution is to adapt to rising global temperatures, not try to revert them back to previous levels by limiting energy-usage. While the Alliance remains speculative of humanity’s role in causing global climate change, it is certain that humans should come first when thinking of solutions to help curb the potential threats of climate change.

Evangelical responses to environmental issues have solidified in their intensity

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50 Ibid., 12 (accessed 17 February 2008).
and political implications over time. Beginning in the 1970s, Evangelical statements on
the care of creation were little more than skeptical platitudes offered in a time of political
upheaval and rising public sympathy for the environmental movement. Throughout the
1980s and 1990s Evangelical entry into the environmental debate expanded, at once
offering more concrete examples of collaborative relationships between religious and
secular groups and fuel for a nascent fire against Evangelical involvement. The emerging
Creation Care movement has also provided many Evangelicals the opportunity to assess
their political leanings in light of the lack of response about global climate change
perceived from the Republican Party.\textsuperscript{52} Richard Cizik told National Public Radio

\begin{quote}
Many view the (Evangelical) movement as being the religious right, 
or lockstep supporters of the Bush administration. It's not true. 
We support the administration on some issues and not others. 
On [climate change] I think you're beginning to see a variance with 
what we call business as usual at the White House.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

Despite Cizik’s insistence that Evangelicals do not blindly follow the lead of the Bush
administration, it is clear that they do not blindly follow the Creation Care movement
either. Many critics like E. Calvin Beisner refuse to let “green Evangelicals” get the
upper hand when it comes to asserting a proper response to global warming in terms of it
effects on the poor and most vulnerable. While both camps utilize biblical language to
justify their claims, they differ on the proper role of man in relationship to the earth as
well as the role of government in ensuring the well being of all people. Cizik and others

\textsuperscript{52} Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Democrats, Evangelicals Team Up on Global
February 2008).
\textsuperscript{53} Barbara Bradley Hagerty, “Evangelical Leaders Urge Action on Climate Change,” \textit{Morning
appear to cross the political divide with their encouragement of increased governmental regulation for the emission of greenhouse gases, a traditionally Democratic stance. At the same time, proponents of the Evangelical Climate Initiative often employ language familiar to their constituencies. Emphasis is placed on the sanctity of life and on “cost-effective market-based mechanisms” in hopes of resonating with “values voters” and Evangelicals who tend to be “pro-business.”

In the next chapter we will explore how these frames are being used by both proponents of the Evangelical Climate Initiative’s claims and critics within the Cornwall Alliance in order to stimulate Evangelical involvement in the debate over climate change in one direction versus another. We will also take a look at the potential for the Creation Care movement to change the conversation about Evangelical involvement in politics and about global warming as a social justice issue. “When Evangelicals speak, Republicans tend to listen, and frankly it's Republicans who need to get the message,” Richard Cizik told National Public Radio.

Time will tell whether the message is getting through.

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“When believing, conservative Christians confront the Scriptures, they turn around... 
Soon we’ll see families and churches embracing creation.”
- Calvin DeWitt

Chapter Three: Framing the Cause

E. Calvin Beisner and Richard Cizik are both conservative Evangelical Christians. Both are supporters of the current Bush administration, and both know how to use language familiar to “values voters” in order to argue their conflicting sides when it comes to the debate over global climate change. While Cizik maintains that a break from the Republican party may be necessary if Evangelical voters are to vote their beliefs when it comes to caring for creation, he continues to use language that resonates with the conservative leanings of many Evangelicals. This chapter will explore the way in which proponents of Creation Care are framing their cause through language inspired by pro-life, pro-business interests, and traditional family structures long used by the Religious Right and associated with conservative Evangelicals more generally. Likewise, this chapter will explore a few of the major challenges that leave proponents of Creation Care still facing an uphill battle when it comes to rallying widespread Evangelical support.

Framing plays a large part in the ways in which individuals and groups interact with and make decisions about the world around them. According to James Druckman,

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Todd Gitlin defines frames as “principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters.”

Since the early 1970s the rising Religious Right movement, coupled with the Republican party, began couching its positions into three categories-- family, education, and moral concerns in order to appeal to the group that would become known as “values voters.”

Conservative framing has only gotten better over the past forty years, according to George Lakoff in a 2001 article, “Simple Framing.” A professor of linguistics at University of California, Berkeley, Lakoff argues that because conservatives have poured a countless amount of resources and energy into forming think tanks, they have been successful in dominating the political conversation within the United States. Lakoff argues there is a growing need for effective liberal framing of political issues in order to counter conservative-dominated conversations.

In much of the same way, Democratic leaders in recent years have expressed the need for members of their party to wrestle religion as a defining frame for conservatives away from the Republican party. Several Evangelical leaders agree. Tony Campolo, a left-leaning Evangelical spokesman and professor of sociology at Eastern College, told ABC News in a 2006 interview:

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4 Ibid., 227.
6 Lakoff is one of several professors at UC Berkeley and UC Davis to found the Rockridge Institute, a progressive think tank committed to helping progressive candidates better format their political messages (Source: Bonnie Azab Powell, “Framing the Issues: UC Berkeley Professor Lakoff Tells How Conservatives Use Language to Dominate Politics” UC Berkeley News Center, 23 October 2003, http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/10/27_lakoff.shtml. (Accessed 2 March 2008.).
We are furious that the religious right has made Jesus into a Republican. That's idolatry…To recreate Jesus in your own image rather than allowing yourself to be created in Jesus' image is what's wrong with politics.\textsuperscript{8}

This distancing of conservative Christianity from the Republican Party remains a difficult obstacle to overcome when 86 percent of white Evangelicals agree that “liberals have gone too far in trying to exclude religion from the schools and government.”\textsuperscript{9 10} At the same time, Campolo’s statement echoes Richard Cizik’s comments on National Public Radio quoted at the end of the previous chapter. Many Evangelicals, conservative and liberal, resent the notion that because they are Evangelicals they are a part of the Religious Right or “lockstep supporters of the Bush administration.”\textsuperscript{11} While on opposite ends of the political spectrum, Cizik and Campolo are both advocates for the involvement of people of faith in the democratic process; they are also wary of that involvement being exploited by politicians on either side of the aisle in order to guarantee re-election.

Despite this frustration of being lumped with the Republican Party, Cizik and other proponents of the Creation Care movement continue to use frames made salient by conservative leaders over the past three decades. Couching environmental degradation as an affront to the unborn and to traditional family values resonates among conservative


\textsuperscript{9} Compare this 69 percent of all Americans who agree that liberals have gone too far in attempting to keep religion separate from the government and schools (Source: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Many Americans Uneasy with Mix of Religion and Politics,” Section II: Religion and Politics, (26 August 2006), www.pewforum.org, Accessed 4 March 2008.)


Christians because it plays into the issues already at the fore of a prominent political and social agenda. “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action” asserts its signatories are “proud of the Evangelical community’s longstanding commitment to the sanctity of human life” and that global climate change disproportionately affects the poorest of the poor. Likewise, the Sandy Cove Covenant equates environmental degradations as threats to “families and the unborn.” The still earlier publication, “An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation” addresses the response of many to seek out “non-Christian spiritual resources for healing the earth.” Working for environmental justice is a form of evangelism, a way of reaching unbelievers. This example, along with the previous two, cite justifications that legitimize the increasing pressure on individuals, institutions, and government officials. While these justifications are often infused with theological underpinnings, many of them carry political connotations picked up over the past three decades.

Will recycling of conservative moral and social frames be enough to incite widespread Evangelical support for curbing climate change? Recall that white Evangelicals were twelve percentage points lower than any other demographic group in agreeing that global warming was human-induced and a real threat (37 percent). Given the widespread coverage of the findings attributing global warming to human activity by

the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, these numbers may very well be dated; however, it is important to consider the gaps that must be overcome within the Evangelical community in order for the substance of these numbers to change. Similarly, though the percentage of Evangelical Christians (48 percent) who listed the environment as a priority when considering elections was roughly the same as the percentage of mainline Christians (49 percent) and white Catholics (48 percent), concern for the environment came after concerns about the economy, terrorism, health care, and education among all three groups.15 Evangelical Christians were the only group to place abortion and gay marriage above the environment when prioritizing voting preferences.16 By using conservative moral and social frames to present the Creation Care position, stewardship proponents are bolstering its saliency among Evangelicals.

In addition to a rising global consciousness about climate change and the use of previously successful framing techniques, Creation Care proponents have another trend in their favor. Churches and religious institutions often serve as a catalyst for political participation and are one of the primary places where Americans learn about political and social causes. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady argue that churches and religious institutions provide a place where members can be exposed to political stimulation and learn civic skills that can lead to more advanced political participation.17 In addition, church affiliation, though on the decline since the 1960s, remains the most common voluntary

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16 Ibid. (Accessed 8 March 2008).
association for Americans. The sheer number of people reached by religious institutions within the United States is particularly high for Evangelicals, given the fact that twenty-six percent of Americans identify themselves as Evangelical Christians.

This tendency often transcends several demographic boundaries. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady assert that “participation in religious institutions is much less structured by income, race, or ethnicity than is political activity” than many other non-political institutions. It is clear that conservative Christian organizations and leaders have been successful in mobilizing lay people for political and social causes, presenting a formidable voting bloc that coalesced to re-elect George W. Bush in 2004 and a lobbying presence that keeps issues like creation science, opposition to gay marriage, and abortion as contentious political issues. While Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s research fails to break down political knowledge and participation into mainline or evangelical categories, Protestants reported practicing a civic skill in church nearly three times as much as Catholics (37 percent compared to 13 percent). The percentage asked to take political action is only slightly higher for Protestants in comparison with Catholics (35 percent to 33 percent).

Interestingly enough, frequency of church attendance was found to lessen the priority placed on the environment while voting, though only differing by six

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21 Ibid., 378.
percentage points between high church attendance and seldom church attendance.\textsuperscript{22} It is likely that the framing of environmental concerns like global climate change into categories that resonate with conservative Evangelical voters, coupled with the increasing awareness of human-induced climate change, will help bolster concern for the environment among that demographic group.

The public statements by Evangelicals concerning the care of creation paint a picture of a movement that is disseminating from the top down. Creation Care leaders like Calvin DeWitt (Au Sable Institute), Jim Ball (Evangelical Environmental Network), and Ron Sider (Evangelicals for Social Action) represent organizations committed to elevating environmental stewardship to a permanent position on the list of concerns for Evangelicals. But is the message resonating with the twenty-six percent of American adults who identify as Evangelical Christian?\textsuperscript{23} As previously stated, white Evangelical Christians are the second most likely Christian demographic group to hear about the environment from the pulpit.\textsuperscript{24} Interestingly enough, given charges leveled at the environmental movement for neglect of minorities and the poor, the same poll shows that the Christian demographic group most likely to hear about the environment from the pulpit is “Black Protestant.”\textsuperscript{25} In \textit{The Greening of Protestant Thought} Robert Booth Fowler argues that a lack of scholarship addressing eco-justice and racial questions


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. (Accessed 7 March 2008).
continues to play into the perception of elitism on behalf of the environmental movement.\textsuperscript{26} “Eco-justice” has long been a staple of liberal Protestant responses to environmental and humanitarian concerns and has, more recently, been promoted by several “green” Evangelical sources.\textsuperscript{27} This kind of commitment can be seen in “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action” where concerns for the world’s poor are highlighted as an on-going legacy among Evangelicals that can be explicitly tied to the effort to curb human-induced climate change.

Statements like “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action” and its predecessors are problematic due to the very nature of Evangelicalism within the United States. In light of this statement and others on the need to address global climate change, the question remains: Who has the authority to speak for Evangelicals? The National Association of Evangelicals, as noted previously, boasts a membership roll of 30 million or more Americans. While seemingly an impressive sum, it makes criticisms from groups like the Cornwall Alliance on Environmental Stewardship seem all the more threatening. "Bible-believing Evangelicals . . . disagree about the cause, severity and solutions to the global warming issue” the letter to Ted Haggard, then-President of the National Association of Evangelicals read from the Cornwall Alliance for Stewardship of Creation led by E. Calvin Beisner.\textsuperscript{28} This contention over authority is a result of the sheer number of Evangelical Christians within the United States and the tendency of Evangelical

churches to be organized on a model of congregational polity. This model allows for individual congregations to remain largely autonomous and resist outside pressures calling for change.  

Despite these challenges, the commitment to caring for creation seems to be taking root at the congregational and local levels. Judy Bonds, Carmelita Brown, and Allen Johnson are all Evangelical Christians and environmental activists. As residents of rural West Virginia, their homes and surrounding lands have been adversely affected by the mountaintop mining practices of coal companies such as Massey Energy. Not only do these practices degrade the land, they ruin water supplies to the point that churchgoers often deliver water to aging and homebound residents because the tap water is unfit to drink. The challenge for some pastors in the area is that in the same pews on any given Sunday sit local residents whose lives are put at risk because of the actions of other members who work for the coal companies. Despite this, protecting her home from coal companies led Judy Bonds, Coordinator for Coal River Mountain Watch and winner of the 2003 Goldman Environmental Prize, back to her faith by making it relevant to her life.

Across the country, another congregation is taking up the call to be good stewards of the environment. At Boise Vineyard Church in Boise, Idaho, Pastor Tri Robinson was initially fearful of bringing up the commitment to caring for creation during one of his

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30 “Coal Country” Is God Green?, DVD, documentary by Bill Moyers. PBS Moyers on America (Aired October 6, 2006).
31 Ibid.
sermons. After six months of preparation, he finally presented to his congregation why caring for creation is an integral part of Christian witness. Much to his relief, they agreed. Today, Boise Vineyard boasts a vibrant environmental ministry that includes a “tithing your trash” program as well as clean-up efforts for local scenic areas and regularly scheduled family outdoor activities.\textsuperscript{32} Though the Creation Care movement is the loudest among Evangelical leaders and lobbyists, there is substantial evidence from individuals and congregations around the nation that a commitment to protecting and preserving the environment fits squarely within the realm of faith-filled action.

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\textsuperscript{32} “Coal Country” \textit{Is God Green?}, DVD, documentary by Bill Moyers. PBS Moyers on America (Aired October 6, 2006).
To honor Rembrandt without taking care of Rembrandt’s paintings doesn’t make sense, and similarly, honoring God as creator without taking care of creation doesn’t make much sense.
- Calvin DeWitt

Conclusion

Growing concern over the ways in which human beings interact with the environment permeates media coverage and is setting the tone for popular religious culture. “Going Green” is the latest trend. Campaigns with names like “What Would Noah Do?” and “What Would Jesus Drive?” give testimony to the fact that a growing number of Evangelicals are taking a stand in favor of environmental stewardship. From protecting endangered species and encouraging Christians to think about sustainable living as a biblically-sanctioned commitment to calling on elected officials to propose and support action to curb human-induced climate change, Evangelicals are speaking out—and they are being heard.

In order to ensure that environmental issues resonate among fellow Evangelicals, proponents of Creation Care place these issues within pre-existing frames that have proved salient for conservative Evangelical Christians. In addition, biblically inspired language is being used to give credibility to an issue long seen as liberal and often non-

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Christian. By doing so, Evangelicals argue they not only have a chance to be good stewards of God’s creation but also of evangelizing those who often see the church as antithetical to caring for the environment.

Not all Evangelicals are on board with these efforts to keep the ark afloat. The Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation stands in direct opposition to the proponents of Creation Care not in the biblical justifications for their work but in the substance of their calls to action. By analyzing these disagreements, it becomes clear that the reasons for the diverging opinions are more political than they are theological, though many of the disagreements stem from a fundamental understanding of humanity’s relationship to the natural world, or creation. Dominion supporters argue that the earth was created for man to use as he has need of it; the land must be bent and broken to his will. Stewardship advocates argue that the earth needs to be tended by humanity as a gardener would a garden from which he derives his sustenance.

Though these theological underpinnings lie at the heart of the justifications for proponents and critics of Creation Care, the divergence in their calls to action reflect a decision to question the once-strong relationship between Evangelical Christians and the Republican party or, in the case of the critics, to uphold the conservative economic, environmental, and social stances that have dominated the political scene for decades. At the same time, Richard Cizik and other Creation Care proponents have pointed out that being a “green” Christian does not necessarily ensure one’s vote will be cast on the left instead of the right. Joel Salatin is part of a growing movement of Christian agrarians. He describes himself as a “Christian libertarian environmental capitalist” and finds his call to
care for creation through working on a small organic farm in Virginia. Salatin sums up well the frustration echoed by many within the Creation Care movement

We look at the liberal, who wants to abort babies and hug trees. We say, “What is it with you?” Well they look at me and you and say, “What is this about you pro-lifers who want genetically engineer[ed] food and eradicate everything?”

The movement among conservative Evangelicals to take up the cause of caring for creation by no means signals a shift in favor of the Democratic Party. It does create a political environment where politicians, if hoping to garner Evangelical support, must re-think about the priorities “values voters” in a somewhat different light.

Evangelicals and the environment make the headlines often these days as a growing number of denominations and organizations express their concern about human-induced climate change and call their constituencies to action. This is a trend I expect will only continue to increase as natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina become all too frequent reminders of man’s negative impact on nature.

As the implications of human-induced global climate change continue to be revealed worldwide—hitting not only the poorest of the poor but a little closer to home—groups that once viewed one another with a cautious if not distrustful eye are finding themselves on the same side of the picket line. While the worldviews of an Evangelical Christian and a member of the Sierra Club may differ on many points, responsible stewardship of natural resources is quickly becoming common ground. What is fascinating about these re-prioritizations is the fact that they force us to think outside of

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our pre-conceived notions about what it means to be Evangelical in America or to be actively involved in caring for the environment. There is at once a struggle to re-claim religion from the stronghold of the Republican Party and to posit environmentalism as more than just a liberal or Democratic concern. Evangelicals find themselves at the heart of this tug-of-war. While I do not suspect Evangelical churches will replace the Sierra Club anytime soon, it is encouraging to note that political ties and assumptions several decades old are being challenged for the greater good. This is a challenge long overdue.
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b. “The Oneness of Biblical and Ecological Teaching.” Interview with Calvin DeWitt.


Appendix

Included below are several statements issued by the National Association of Evangelicals, The Interfaith Stewardship Alliance along with several other Evangelical initiatives from 1970 to 2006 which are discussed at length in Chapter Two. Also included is the controversial newsletter announcement sent out by E. Calvin Beisner and the ensuing conversation between Bill Moyers and Beisner.

ECOLOGY (1970)¹

National Association of Evangelicals

Scientists are alarmed. Many assert that runaway technology, pollution and consumption, if left uncontrolled, could spell the extinction of the human race.

The age of affluence has been very much an age of waste. There is the problem of disposing of mankind's waste products. One day billions could be struggling literally for a last breath.

Beyond the scientific, biological and political ramifications of our environment problem is a basically theological and religious issue. Men who thoughtlessly killed animal life to the point of extinction a hundred years ago might not have realized the implications of their actions. Today those who thoughtlessly destroy a God-ordained balance of nature are guilty of sin against God's creation. We know better.

When God looked on what He had made, He called it good. Christians should remember that they were entrusted with the stewardship of all God’s earthly creation and resources (Psalm 8:6-8; 50: 10, 11). Even though we believe Christ will return before man can utterly destroy himself, we also believe future generations have as much right to enjoy this world, and make it fruitful, as we.

The National Association of Evangelicals therefore calls on all Christians to ensure this right and so fulfill the biblical commission to subdue and replenish the earth.

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

¹ http://www.nae.net/index.cfm?FUSEACTION=editor.page&pageID=198&IDCategory=9
We pledge ourselves to support every legitimate effort to maintain balance in ecology, preservation of our resources, and avoidance of the cluttering of our natural beauty with the waster of our society.
ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY (1971)²

National Association of Evangelicals

Man's multiplication and progress have combined to create environmental problems of huge proportions on the earth. Today responsible authorities view the waste and pollution of natural resources with undisguised alarm, seriously questioning whether the problems created can be solved without placing drastic restrictions upon present standards of living in the developed countries.

Threatened with the very real possibility of an uninhabitable environment within another lifetime, some groups and organizations have reacted with a zeal that has not always been according to knowledge, however borne of justifiable desperation. Others have moved responsibly but with little evidence of public support.

Recognizing both the immediacy of the danger and the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28, the National Association of Evangelicals instinct for human survival, but expresses man's responsibility under God to act as a faithful steward of the natural world. The commandment to fill and subdue the earth (Genesis 9:1) implied a vigorously affirms that ecology is not merely founded upon an trust which we believe is violated by any wastage or spoilage of the environment detrimental to the welfare of mankind in the present age.

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, even at the cost of personal discomfort or inconvenience.

² http://www.nae.net/index.cfm?FUSEACTION=editor.page&pageID=199&IDCategory=9
"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1 NIV).

Modern society is greatly concerned with the condition of the earth. Water and fuel supplies, pollution, the environment and other problems challenge us to find proper ways to deal with the world.

The Bible reveals God as the creator and owner of the universe. Still, it teaches that each individual has a vitally important role to play as a steward in God's domain. God has chosen to give us major responsibility for this world. This stewardship includes both the proper use and conservation of natural and human resources. They must be managed in a way that brings glory to God and furthers His purposes in the world.

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. On the other hand, we have conservation groups that seem to misunderstand proper utilization. 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.

The natural environment is given for the use and provision of all living things. Food, shelter and clothing, along with recreation and pleasure, are provided to us by the natural world. To pollute and abuse the world in our pursuit of profit or pleasure is unacceptable in God's sight.

God has given human resources in the form of scientific and artistic ability. But science and technology used for power, control and the destruction of the human and the natural world; intelligence used to develop ungodly philosophies; business acumen used only for personal advancement; artistic ability that is perverted for the production of the pornographic and obscene; and 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.

Recognizing the great challenge that God has given us in the stewardship of the earth, the National Association of Evangelicals calls upon its churches, denominations, mission agencies and educational institutions to examine their goals and procedures in light of the biblical injunction to be good stewards. We call upon individual Christians as well to

3 http://www.nae.net/index.cfm?FUSEACTION=editor.page&pageID=83&IDCategory=9
examine the ways in which they live and use the resources of time, talent, mind, body, thoughts and finances over which they have control.

May the Church at large be a model of the ways and values of God in its stewardship of God's resources. True Christian stewardship is recognizing and living out a commitment to the truth that "The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it."
The Sandy Cove Covenant and Invitation (June 2004)\(^4\)

*National Association of Evangelical/Christianity Today/Evangelical Environmental Network*

We are a gathering of evangelical Christians who provide institutional, pastoral, and intellectual leadership in a wide variety of life settings. We have come together at Sandy Cove, Maryland in order to pray, reflect, and learn together about our role as stewards of God’s creation. We are convinced that God has moved among us in our time together over these three days.

We represent a variety of perspectives and varying levels of expertise about environmental issues. Some of us have given our entire lives to caring for all of God’s creation, while for others the issue is a new one. For all of us, this meeting has resulted in a deepening of our concern about God’s creation, a joyful sense of community, and a desire to work together on these issues in days ahead.

In reflecting on Scripture and on the pressing environmental problems that beset our world, we are persuaded that we must not evade our responsibility to care for God’s creation. We recognize that there is much more we need to learn, and much more praying we need to do, but that we know enough to know that there is no turning back from engaging the threats to God’s creation.

We feel called of God to covenant together to move the work of creation-care ahead in a variety of ways. Therefore:

We covenant together to make creation-care a permanent dimension of our Christian discipleship and to deepen our theological and biblical understanding of the issues involved.

We covenant together to draw upon the very best and most trustworthy resources that can help us understand the particular environmental challenges we face today, as well as promising solutions, as fully and accurately as possible.

We covenant together to share our growing knowledge and concern about these issues with other members of our constituencies.

We invite our brothers and sisters in Christ to engage with us the most pressing environmental questions of our day, such as health threats to families and the unborn, the negative effects of environmental degradation on the poor, God’s endangered creatures, and the important current debate about human-induced climate change. We covenant

\(^4\)http://www.nae.net/index.cfm?FUSEACTION=editor.page&pageID=121&IDCategory=9
together to engage the evangelical community in a discussion about the question of climate change with the goal of reaching a consensus statement on the subject in twelve months.

Our continuing goal is to motivate the evangelical community to fully engage environmental issues in a biblically faithful and humble manner, collaborating with those who share these concerns, that we might take our appropriate place in the healing of God’s creation, and thus the advance of God’s reign.

Signatories*
*Please Note: Institutional affiliation provided for information purposes only. Signatories do so as individuals and not as representatives of their institutions.

Rev. Peter Borgdorff, Executive Director, Christian Reformed Church
Rev. Paul Cedar, Chair, Mission America
Rev. Richard Cizik, VP of Governmental Affairs, National Association of Evangelicals
Andy Crouch, Columnist, Christianity Today
Dr. Cal DeWitt, President, Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies
Rev. Barrett Duke, VP for Public Policy & Research, Southern Baptist Ethics Commission
Adrienne Gaines, News Editor, Charisma magazine
Dr. Dave Gushee, Professor, Union University
Rev. Ted Haggard, President, National Association of Evangelicals
Rev. Dave Holdren, General Superintendent, Wesleyan Church
Sir John Houghton, Chairman, John Ray Initiative
Dr. Cheryl Johns, Professor, Church of God Theological Seminary
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Rev. Jo Anne Lyon, Executive Director, World Hope
Dr. Ron Mahurin, VP for Campus Programs & Communications, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
Rev. Dwight McKissic, Senior Pastor, Cornerstone Baptist Church
Rev. Brian McLaren, Emergent
David Neff, Editor, Christianity Today
Shelly Ngo, Dir. of Publications, World Vision
Michael Nyenhuis, President, MAP International
Rev. Paul Risser, Former President, FourSquare Church
Rev. Ron Sider, President, Evangelicals for Social Action
Mark Smith, Dir. of Disaster Response, World Relief
Dr. Howard Snyder, Prof., Asbury Seminary
Rev. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church in America
Rev. Bob Wenz, VP of Natl. Ministries, National Association of Evangelicals
Bruce Wilkinson, VP of International Programs, World Vision
John Wilson, Editor, Books & Culture, Christianity Today
Rev. Jim Ball, Ex. Dir., Evangelical Environmental Network
Please Note: The Sandy Cove Covenant and Invitation was adopted on June 30, 2004 at the NAE-CT-EEN Creation Care Conference at the Sandy Cove Christian Conference Center in Maryland.
The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship

The Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation

The past millennium brought unprecedented improvements in human health, nutrition, and life expectancy, especially among those most blessed by political and economic liberty and advances in science and technology. At the dawn of a new millennium, the opportunity exists to build on these advances and to extend them to more of the earth’s people.

At the same time, many are concerned that liberty, science, and technology are more a threat to the environment than a blessing to humanity and nature. Out of shared reverence for God and His creation and love for our neighbors, we Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, speaking for ourselves and not officially on behalf of our respective communities, joined by others of good will, and committed to justice and compassion, unite in this declaration of our common concerns, beliefs, and aspirations.

– Our Concerns –

Human understanding and control of natural processes empower people not only to improve the human condition but also to do great harm to each other, to the earth, and to other creatures. As concerns about the environment have grown in recent decades, the moral necessity of ecological stewardship has become increasingly clear.

At the same time, however, certain misconceptions about nature and science, coupled with erroneous theological and anthropological positions, impede the advancement of a sound environmental ethic. In the midst of controversy over such matters, it is critically important to remember that while passion may energize environmental activism, it is reason—including sound theology and sound science—that must guide the decision-making process. We identify three areas of common misunderstanding:

1. Many people mistakenly view 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. The increasing realization of this potential 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. A clean environment is a costly good; consequently, growing affluence, technological innovation, and the application of human and material capital are integral to environmental improvement. The tendency among some to oppose economic progress in the name of environmental stewardship is often sadly self-defeating.

2. Many people believe that “nature knows best,” or that the earth—untouched by human

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5 http://www.cornwallalliance.org/articles/read/the-cornwall-declaration-on-environmental-stewardship/
hands—is the ideal. Such romanticism leads some to deify nature or oppose human dominion over creation. Our position, informed by revelation and confirmed by reason and experience, views human stewardship that unlocks the potential in creation for all the earth’s inhabitants as good. Humanity alone of all the created order is capable of developing other resources and can thus enrich creation, so it can properly be said that the human person is the most valuable resource on earth. Human life, therefore, must be cherished and allowed to flourish. The alternative—denying the possibility of beneficial human management of the earth—removes all rationale for environmental stewardship.

3. While some environmental concerns are well founded and serious, others are without foundation or greatly exaggerated. Some well-founded concerns focus on human health problems in the developing world arising from inadequate sanitation, widespread use of primitive biomass fuels like wood and dung, and primitive agricultural, industrial, and commercial practices; distorted resource consumption patterns driven by perverse economic incentives; and improper disposal of nuclear and other hazardous wastes in nations lacking adequate regulatory and legal safeguards. Some unfounded or undue concerns include fears of destructive man-made global warming, overpopulation, and rampant species loss.

The real and merely alleged problems differ in the following ways:
1. The former are proven and well understood, while the latter tend to be speculative.
2. The former are often localized, while the latter are said to be global and cataclysmic in scope.
3. The former are of concern to people in developing nations especially, while the latter are of concern mainly to environmentalists in wealthy nations.
4. The former are of high and firmly established risk to human life and health, while the latter are of very low and largely hypothetical risk.
5. Solutions proposed to the former are cost effective and maintain proven benefit, while solutions to the latter are unjustifiably costly and of dubious benefit.

Public policies to combat exaggerated risks can dangerously delay or reverse the economic development necessary to improve not only human life but also human stewardship of the environment. The poor, who are most often citizens of developing nations, are often forced to suffer longer in poverty with its attendant high rates of malnutrition, disease, and mortality; as a consequence, they are often the most injured by such misguided, though well-intended, policies.

— Our Beliefs —

Our common Judeo-Christian heritage teaches that the following theological and anthropological principles are the foundation of environmental stewardship:
1. God, the Creator of all things, rules over all and deserves our worship and adoration.
2. The earth, and with it all the cosmos, reveals its Creator’s wisdom and is sustained and governed by His power and lovingkindness.
3. Men and women were created in the image of God, given a privileged place among creatures, and commanded to exercise stewardship over the earth. Human persons are
moral agents for whom freedom is an essential condition of responsible action. Sound environmental stewardship must attend both to the demands of human well being and to a divine call for human beings to exercise caring dominion over the earth. It affirms that human well being and the integrity of creation are not only compatible but also dynamically interdependent realities.

4. God’s Law—summarized in the Decalogue and the two Great Commandments (to love God and neighbor), which are written on the human heart, thus revealing His own righteous character to the human person—represents God’s design for shalom, or peace, and is the supreme rule of all conduct, for which personal or social prejudices must not be substituted.

5. By disobeying God’s Law, humankind brought on itself moral and physical corruption as well as divine condemnation in the form of a curse on the earth. Since the fall into sin people have often ignored their Creator, harmed their neighbors, and defiled the good creation.

6. God in His mercy has not abandoned sinful people or the created order but has acted throughout history to restore men and women to fellowship with Him and through their stewardship to enhance the beauty and fertility of the earth.

7. Human beings are called to be fruitful, to bring forth good things from the earth, to join with God in making provision for our temporal well being, and to enhance the beauty and fruitfulness of the rest of the earth. Our call to fruitfulness, therefore, is not contrary to but mutually complementary with our call to steward God’s gifts. This call implies a serious commitment to fostering the intellectual, moral, and religious habits and practices needed for free economies and genuine care for the environment.

– Our Aspirations –

In light of these beliefs and concerns, we declare the following principled aspirations:

1. We aspire to a world in which human beings care wisely and humbly for all creatures, first and foremost for their fellow human beings, recognizing their proper place in the created order.

2. We aspire to a world in which objective moral principles—not personal prejudices—guide moral action.

3. We aspire to a world in which right reason (including sound theology and the careful use of scientific methods) guides the stewardship of human and ecological relationships.

4. We aspire to a world in which liberty as a condition of moral action is preferred over government-initiated management of the environment as a means to common goals.

5. We aspire to a world in which the relationships between stewardship and private property are fully appreciated, allowing people’s natural incentive to care for their own property to reduce the need for collective ownership and control of resources and enterprises, and in which collective action, when deemed necessary, takes place at the most local level possible.

6. We aspire to a world in which widespread economic freedom—which is integral to private, market economies—makes sound ecological stewardship available to ever greater numbers.

7. We aspire to a world in which advancements in agriculture, industry, and commerce
not only minimize pollution and transform most waste products into efficiently used resources but also improve the material conditions of life for people everywhere.
Things are breaking very fast in climate science, particularly with regard to the contribution of sun and stars to earth's climate. Ever since the global warming scare arose, the assumption has been almost universal among those who embrace the manmade catastrophic climate change hypothesis that most global average temperature change is attributable to greenhouse gases, particularly to CO2, and that very little to changes in solar radiation. As former IPCC chairman John Houghton in his Global Warming: The Complete Briefing (3d ed., 2004), which is nearly the bible of the catastrophists, said of solar variability, "its influence is much less than that of the increase in greenhouse gases" (p. 52). That assertion, made in the face of considerable data demonstrating stronger correlation between solar variability and temperature variability than between CO2 concentration and temperature variability, is based largely on the lack of a theoretical explanation of how solar variability, which is comparatively small, might account for comparatively large temperature changes. To put it simply, although the strong correlation was obvious, lack of identification of a causal mechanism led many to discount it as coincidental. In recent months, however, a rising crescendo of research publication provides the theoretical explanation, and the result is to reverse the priority of solar variability and greenhouse gases as causes of temperature variation. Recent issues of this newsletter have featured references to several such studies. Today's contains three more stories on this very important development, including reference to some researchers who assert that, far from having influence "much less than that of the increase in greenhouse gases," solar variability, indirectly by its effect on the influx of cosmic rays into the earth's atmosphere, could account for 75 percent of global average temperature change. If that is so, the manmade catastrophic greenhouse warming theory is dead.

Before we get to those items, two others. First, not earthshaking regarding climate science but of some interest to yours truly, Bill Moyers's documentary "Is God Green?" (Click here: WGBH Programs) airs on PBS Wednesday evening, October 11 (check local listings). When Moyers interviewed me for the documentary last spring, he very candidly told me that he is a liberal Democrat and intended for the documentary to influence the November elections to bring control of Congress back to the Democrats. Don't expect good science, economics, or ethics--or even journalistic balance.

6 http://www.pbs.org/moyers/moyersonamerica/green/index.html
Text of Bill Moyers Response

E-mail to E. Calvin Beisner

-----Original Message-----
From: Moyers, Bill
Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2006 12:47 PM
To: Calvin Beisner
Subject: What has come over you?

You are not telling the truth. In fact, what you wrote in the ISA newsletter is an outright lie. You claim that "When Moyers interviewed me for the documentary last spring, he very candidly told me that he is a liberal Democrat and intended for the documentary to influence the November elections to bring control of Congress back to the Democrats." I said nothing of the sort -- nothing. To the contrary, I told you that I am an independent - members of the crew remember my saying that to you specifically (there were, remember, three other people in the room.) You yourself taped the entire session with your own recorder; show me where in the transcript such a conversation occurred. I also told you, as I told everyone interviewed, that we of course could not use the entire interview but that I would post it on our Website when the broadcast aired, as was done. If I had said anything approaching what you claim I said, if you perceived any bias on my part, you could have -- and should have -- refused to participate. But you did participate freely, you were treated fairly and honestly, and for you now to bear false witness is not only unChristian but astonishing. What am I to make of the many friendly emails you have sent over these months, signed: "In Christ, Cal"? Or our exchange on how much I have enjoyed your daughter's CD that you sent? Your conservative evangelical brothers who were also interviewed in the documentary -- from Richard Cizik to Tri Robinson to Allan Johnson (not a liberal among them) have written in praise of how they were treated. You and you alone have chosen to bear false witness to our conversation and to defame -- in your own words -- the ethics and journalistic balance of the documentary. You owe me and my team an apology and a public retraction.

Bill

7 http://www.pbs.org/moyers/moyersonamerica/green/index.html
Dear Calvin Beisner:

As this weekend passed and there was no response from you to my urgent request that you retract the lie that you have been spreading about me, my anger gave way to sorrow. There was only silence from you as your defamation raced across Cyberspace. By Sunday evening I had concluded that you were waiting for the damage to accumulate, knowing that with the Internet, a lie circles the earth instantly while truth stumbles to its feet.

And this saddened me. I had not wanted to believe that you are just as eager as your allies on the Right to practice the polemics of personal destruction. I knew that you were the designated spokesman on environmental matters for the religious wing of the political right, which is why they sent me to you. But I came to Florida in good faith, and I left believing that if you and I had such a cordial conversation, perhaps the sorely-needed dialogue among evangelical Christians in America might actually be possible. For so long the invective of the Falwells, Robertsons, and Dobsons has poisoned relations with other Christians. The transformation of Christianity into a political religion – a weapon of partisan combat – weighs heavily on the soul of democracy. I read Ann Coulter, listen to Sean Hannity and Bill O'Reilly and Rush Limbaugh and Michael Savage – and I do not recognize the God they are talking about or the people they demonize, myself included. The great heart of Jesus seems missing from their worldview. The Golden Rule is tarnished and twisted. The Bible is turned into a partisan tract. And the Beatitudes are blasphemed. The profound themes of our historic faith – justice, mercy, love, compassion, redemption, and forgiveness – are swept away in the toxic dust of their vituperation. The propagation of the Gospel – the Good News – has been replaced by the polemics of personal destruction. As I listen and read all this, I think to myself: If this is what the world sees and hears of our faith today, no wonder Jesus weeps.

But you seemed different from these people, and I left our interview and conversation with a measure of hope. You and I interpret the Bible differently. We see faith through different lenses. Our views on social issues vary. But we had such a good-natured discussion about some of these issues – it shows in the broadcast – that at some level we seemed to connect despite our differences. You even offered to drive me to the airport after the interview. En route we talked

---Original Message----
From: Moyers, Bill
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2006 3:21 PM
To: Calvin Beisner
Subject:

8 http://www.pbs.org/moyers/moyersonamerica/green/index.html
about personal concerns – about your children and my grandchildren, how hard it is to raise kids in such a coarse society, our graduate studies at different Scottish universities, our roots in faith, your daughter Susan's music, my son's successful struggle with addiction. We scarcely mentioned politics. You said you didn't much follow political events. I said that once I left the Kennedy and Johnson administrations almost 40 years ago for journalism, I had put partisanship behind me. On the plane home I considered how, if Christians of all stripes started listening to each other – not to agree but to try and understand – perhaps a new conversation about faith and democracy, religion and politics, might yet happen.

Over the coming months we stayed in touch. I sent you a copy of my documentary Amazing Grace. You sent me a CD of Susan's Redeeming Love. You signed your emails "In Christ." I worked all the harder in the editing room to give evangelicals of different stripes the chance to hear what their brothers and sisters in the faith are saying about the environment. The only reason I had undertaken to produce this documentary was because it is an important issue and a good story – a story no one else in broadcast journalism has addressed. But I began to see that it could be a useful and positive means for evangelicals who differ on the environment better to understand what each side is saying.

All of this was in good faith. Or so I thought.

Then, on the eve of the broadcast, came your devastating attack. Blog reports suddenly popped up which said you claimed in a newsletter that "When Moyers interviewed me for the documentary last spring, he very candidly told me that he is a liberal Democrat and intended for the documentary to influence the November elections to bring control of Congress back to the Democrats. Don't expect good science, economics, or ethics – or even journalistic balance."

I was stunned. This was not just a critique, an opinion, or even an attack – it was a lie, clearly timed to discredit the documentary just prior to broadcast. I had said nothing of the sort to you. Not in 35 years of broadcasting has it crossed my mind that journalism should try to elect or defeat any candidate or party. Partisan talk radio and cable channels to the contrary, any journalist who tries to do so would be – and should be – drummed out of the craft. And anyone stupid enough to announce such intentions to a guest – even in jest – should follow the Gadarene swine over the cliff to oblivion.

I immediately emailed you to ask whether you actually said such a thing. I wrote again later that day, asking: "What has come over you?" I said you were not telling the truth and I asked for a retraction and an apology as your lie gained speed across the Internet. You replied the next morning only to say that you were busy and that you "should" be able to send me a reply at the end of that day, in your own good time. I was furious and wrote back immediately asking how you intended to rectify this lie. You were undermining my reputation and credibility, not to mention my livelihood, and were blasé about it. You then replied with no substantive response but a definition of the word "lie," as if you proposed to avoid responsibility on the basis of a dictionary definition! Given your rebuff of my appeal, I asked my attorney to contact you immediately and put you on notice that if you did not act forthrightly to retract the lie, I had no alternative but to seek recourse by other means. For the fact is that lies allowed to
spread like virtual kudzu on the Internet can permanently injure their victims while poisoning the wellsprings of democracy. It is okay for you to criticize my journalism, or for me to take issue with your theology; it is not acceptable that we lie about each other. The 9th Commandment says plainly: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." Jesus says simply, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Presumably that includes bearing false witness against even journalists, although many of your allies have been doing just that for a long time now. The Right relentlessly employs lies, deceit, distortions, exaggerations, and mischaracterizations to intimidate journalists and discredit those with whom they disagree.

You responded late that day with an email to me in which you admitted that the first half of your statement was indeed false, and you apologized for that; but you let stand the most damaging part of your false statement which attacked my integrity. My attorney wrote you once again the following day, Thursday, demanding a full retraction but I have received nothing further from you.

I had not wanted to think that you were willing to join the right wing's ongoing crusade against journalists. But as the weekend wore on with no appearance of a retraction or apology, I realized that I was wrong. You were willing to defame a journalist who had come to you in good faith, had treated you honorably, made sure your interview was edited fairly and, then, in the interest of transparency, posted the full transcript so people could judge for themselves. In the face of the fairness and respect I showed you, you not only lied about me but you allowed the lie to gather speed and force as we have seen happen so often in coordinated attacks by the right wing on the people and institutions they would destroy. Sadly, I concluded, it is time to say, "Enough's enough!" Let's ask a body of our peers to weigh how much tolerance a society can accord lies that defame others.

That was my position as of Monday morning. Day after day you had allowed your poison to spread. Then, on Monday I learned of your lawyer's letter, saying that you stand by your position but that you are "troubled by the fracturing of the relationship" and "desire to attempt to restore that relationship outside of the civil courts as Christians are admonished to do in First Corinthians chapter six."

Well, the relationship is fractured because of your lie and refusal to rectify it. A simple retraction and apology is all I ask. As you ponder my request, I would urge that you do two things: Put on your daughter's music – the music you sent me – as I did on Sunday while thinking about your behavior. Then read the fifth chapter of Matthew, as I also did on Sunday. Then we'll see what happens.

Bill Moyers