

# WHY THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT MUST PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT: THEOCENTRICITY IN THE POLITICAL WORKPLACE

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Thus were your fathers made  
Fellow citizens of the saints, of the household of *GOD*,  
    being built upon the foundation  
Of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself the chief  
    cornerstone.  
But you, have you built well, that you now sit helpless in a  
    ruined house?<sup>1</sup>

## I. INTRODUCTION

### *A. Prologue*

In 1991, Professor Carol Rose asked a question dear to every environmental lawyer's heart: "How can we make sense of environmental law?"<sup>2</sup> Her answer divides regulatory mechanisms into four categories, considers the cost and potential effectiveness of each, and concludes that current efforts at environmental regulation fail to take advantage of a potent human factor: moral suasion.<sup>3</sup> Rose's hopes for the usefulness of moral suasion in preserving the environment concentrate on examples of citizens who simply "try to do the right thing"

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<sup>1</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Choruses from "The Rock,"* in *COLLECTED POEMS: 1909-1962* 147, 152 (1970).

<sup>2</sup> Carol M. Rose, *Rethinking Environmental Controls: Management Strategies For Common Resources*, 1991 *DUKE L.J.* 1, 1 (1991).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 32-33.

not only in response to a command-and-control regulatory structure, but also in dedication to a personal value system or respected social norm and in appreciation of what "the right thing" is and how it should be accomplished.<sup>4</sup> In the context of common resource allocation and environmental protection, Rose argues that the developers of public policy should consider what privately held beliefs and norms are reinforced by the implementation of a proposed regulatory system.<sup>5</sup> We should choose systems that reinforce positive societal values through their implementation. Reciprocally, when action required for compliance with a regulatory system also is suggested by the citizen's personal value system, the citizen is more likely to respect and support the regulation. Rose concludes that to act in preservation of common resources, even when to do so might require personal sacrifice, citizens need:

some version of moral suasion to induce them to trust one another and to undertake their respective share of a management system. . . . These may be stories of a common past and of a history over time—the stories that often arise in constitutional discus-

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 30–31. Rose cites everyday examples:

We stand in line at the movies, we respect other people's placemarkings (books, coats) at library tables, we hand change back to the cashier who has undercharged us. . . . Given the prevalence of this type of behavior—sometimes at considerable cost to the persons involved, and with no hope of recompense—it may not seem so laughable to think that people may be swayed by their perceptions of what they think is the right thing to do.

*Id.* Examples also are not uncommon in extraordinary situations. Commenting on why she stood in line for five hours to donate blood after the 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, one resident stated simply: "[i]t's my civic duty and my duty as a Christian. . . ." *Blood Centers Jammed with Crowds of Donors*, OREGONIAN (Portland), Apr. 20, 1995, at A11.

<sup>5</sup> Rose bases her discussion of an individual's selfless activity for the common good on the "prisoners' dilemma" model, in which each prisoner separately is offered the choice of testifying against his alleged coconspirators in exchange for a lesser conviction and sentence. If the prisoners each refuse the plea bargain (i.e., act for the common good of the alleged coconspirators), the chances of acquittal for all greatly are enhanced. But, if the prisoner accepts the plea bargain, he reaps an immediate and certain gain, the lesser sentence, at the expense of his colleagues. Every prisoner runs the risk that if one prisoner accepts the offer and the others do not, the prisoners who proceed to trial likely will receive harsh sentences due to the defector's testimony. Thus, the dilemma pits the immediate good of the individual against the long-term good of the group, or commons, and at the same time pits each prisoner's drive for self-preservation against his knowledge and trust of the other prisoners. See Rose, *supra* note 2, at 30–33. For a discussion of the prisoners' dilemma as it applies to common natural resource allocation and protection, see ROBERT V. PERCIVAL, ET AL., ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION: LAW, SCIENCE AND POLICY 46–56 (1992). Professor William Rodgers uses a modified prisoners' dilemma model to explain the legislative history and formation of many environmental laws. See William H. Rodgers, Jr., *Where Environmental Law and Biology Meet: Of Pandas' Thumbs, Statutory Sleepers, and Effective Law*, 65 U. COLO. L. REV. 25, 57 (1993).

sion. In the environmental context, on the other hand, the stories are most likely to paint a picture of lost or threatened purity, of a world that is moving toward an intensely horrible future—unless, of course, we change our evil ways. But whatever directions they take, narratives are a way of bridging gaps, creating a community and persuading the members of that community to take certain steps in common.<sup>6</sup>

This Article suggests an environmentally protective “version of moral suasion” or “narrative” for the burgeoning group of conservative Christians who seek to apply the doctrines of Christianity to public policy through direct political involvement. For Christians, what is needed is a narrative of environmental responsibility that asks the questions of neither anthropocentrism, biocentrism, deep ecology nor their hybrids.<sup>7</sup> None of these positions is persuasive to the Christian who depends on the Bible<sup>8</sup> for her moral compass. Her narrative, instead, must answer the question, “How would God have us treat His creation?” In short, the Christian environmental narrative is neither biocentric nor anthropocentric; it is theocentric.

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<sup>6</sup> Rose, *supra* note 2, at 32–33.

<sup>7</sup> See Ernest Partridge, *Nature As a Moral Resource*, 6 ENVTL. ETHICS 101, 103 (1984) (“Anthropocentrism is the view that human needs and interests are of supreme, even exclusive, value and importance.”); Richard A. Wilson, *A Critique of Anti-Anthropocentric Biocentrism*, 5 ENVTL. ETHICS 245, 245 (1983) (“[A]nti-anthropocentric biocentrism is the position that human needs, goals, and desires should not be taken as privileged or overriding in considering the needs, desires, interests, and goals of all members of all biological species taken together, and in general that the Earth as a whole should not be interpreted or managed from a human standpoint.”); see also BILL DEVAL & GEORGE SESSIONS, *DEEP ECOLOGY* 67–68 (1985) (“The intuition of biocentric equality is that all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger self-realization.”).

<sup>8</sup> Problems of interpretation and shades of meaning creep into a discussion of this sort early and often. In speaking of “the Bible,” I refer to the Protestant canon of the Old and New Testaments reflected in the King James Version and its many counterparts modernized in language but identical in canonical selection, such as the New American Standard Version. This Article will not discuss intertestamentary writings, to which Protestants refer as the Apocrypha, or writings held sacred by the Catholic Church or other Christian denominations but not included in the Protestant Bible. All biblical quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless noted “KJV,” in which case the quote is taken from the King James Version. Quotations appearing as poetry in the NASB retain their poetic format.

Many of the biblical texts on which I rely are of Jewish origin and would lend themselves to the substitution of the word “Hebrew,” “Jewish,” or “Judeo-Christian” for the word “Christian” in describing to whom this narrative applies. But because I write here as a Christian on matters of personal faith, I do not assume to speak for members of other religious communities, or, indeed, for anyone except myself.

### B. *The Ascendence of the Christian Right*

Although some commentators believe a theocentric approach to environmental protection "will always have a restricted audience,"<sup>9</sup> that audience now has moved into the political arena with significant force. A political observer recently noted that the shift in power from the Democratic to the Republican Party that occurred in national elections in November 1994 and similar Republican gains at the state and local levels are not the result of a mass migration of voters to the GOP but rather of a concentration of white, Protestant, Southern voters into the conservative wing of the Republican Party.<sup>10</sup>

Given the demographic similarities between the new Republican voting block and conservative Christian organizations, it is not surprising that the growth in membership and clout of conservative Christian political organizations has paralleled the GOP's recent successes. The most visible of these organizations is the Christian Coalition, which claims 1.5 million members<sup>11</sup> and operates on an annual budget of twelve to fourteen million dollars.<sup>12</sup> The membership of the Christian Coalition mirrors the demographics of the resurgent Republican Party. Three out of four Protestants responding to a November 1994 national election exit poll had voted for Republican candidates, and slightly over twenty percent of the voters polled described themselves as Protestant evangelicals.<sup>13</sup> Political scientist John Green of the University of Akron estimates that one of every three Republican voters in November 1994 was a white evangelical,<sup>14</sup> and a recent poll by the Christian Coalition claims that "42 percent of all likely Republican primary voters are self-identified born-again evangelicals,

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas E. Hill, Jr., *Ideas of Human Excellence and Preserving the Natural Environment*, in REFLECTING ON NATURE 98, 100 (Lori Gruen & Dale Jamieson eds., 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Lind, *The Southern Coup*, NEW REPUBLIC, June 19, 1995, at 20.

<sup>11</sup> Gustav Niebuhr, *Christian Right Signals To Get GOP's Attention*, OREGONIAN (Portland), May 16, 1995, at A08.

<sup>12</sup> A 1994 report by the Anti-Defamation League (based on 1993 information) states:

[t]he Christian Coalition is the most influential religious right organization of the 1990s, and is considered one of the best-organized political groups in the country. The Coalition claims 900,000 members spread across every state, and 870 chapters. It lists an additional 350,000 grassroots activists on its mailing rolls, volunteers in 50,000 precincts, full-time staff in 19 states, and a "pro-family" database of 1.6 million. Its budget reportedly falls between \$12-14 million.

DAVID CANTOR, THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT: THE ASSAULT ON TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM IN AMERICA 27 (1994).

<sup>13</sup> Niebuhr, *supra* note 11, at A08.

<sup>14</sup> Mark O'Keefe, *Extending the Contract*, OREGONIAN (Portland), May 17, 1995, at A08.

53 percent go to church four times or more a month, and 71 percent self-identify themselves as pro-life."<sup>15</sup>

This demographic parallelism has produced startling political results. The Coalition distributed thirty-three million Republican-oriented voter guides prior to the November 1994 election.<sup>16</sup> In the election, the Republicans gained nine Senate seats and fifty-two House seats, gaining control of both houses of Congress,<sup>17</sup> and "[i]n many close races, the coalition was credited with the winning margin" for Republican candidates.<sup>18</sup> Across the nation, sixty percent of political candidates aligned with conservative Christian political groups in 1994 won national and local elections.<sup>19</sup>

After House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich announced the House Republicans' "Contract With America," in which the GOP pledged to remake American government during the 104th Congress by reducing government regulation, including environmental regulation, by balancing the national budget and by creating congressional term limits,<sup>20</sup> the Christian Coalition spent one million dollars supporting the plan.<sup>21</sup> The Coalition then announced its own "Contract With the American Family" in May 1995.<sup>22</sup> This document called for "a 'religious equality' amendment that would, among other things, allow student-initiated prayer at public high school graduations and sporting events."<sup>23</sup> House Speaker Gingrich is expected to complete the

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<sup>15</sup> *The David Frost Special: Interview With Ralph Reed* (PBS television broadcast, May 19, 1995) (Journal Graphics Transcript #44 at 3-4) (statement of Ralph Reed) (hereinafter Frost). Not surprisingly, the Anti-Defamation League disagrees:

[T]he popular characterization of devout Christians as diehard Republicans is distorted. According to 1992 Gallop surveys, while 41 percent of Republicans identified themselves as "born again," the proportion was nearly the same for Democrats—39 percent. Similarly, 79 percent of Republicans claim to be church members, as do 71 percent of Democrats. Further, 65 percent of Republicans and 63 percent of Democrats agree that religion is "very important" in their lives.

CANTOR, *supra* note 12, at 7 (footnote omitted).

<sup>16</sup> O'Keefe, *supra* note 14, at A08.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> Karen Brandon, *S. California City Recalls Fundamentalists on Board*, OREGONIAN (Portland), Nov. 25, 1994, at A22.

<sup>20</sup> See Kenneth J. Cooper, *GOP Offers a "Contract" To Revive Reagan Years*, WASH. POST, Sept. 28, 1994, at A01.

<sup>21</sup> O'Keefe, *supra* note 14, at A08.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* The Contract with American families also emphasizes restricting access to abortion (although it does not propose an outright ban of abortion), shifting educational funds and authority from the Department of Education to the state and local level, and requiring federal convicts to pay restitution to their victims. Niebuhr, *supra* note 11, at A09.

cycle of support by adopting much of the Coalition's agenda.<sup>24</sup> The extent of the Coalition's new-found clout is reflected in commentator David Frost's remarks, made while interviewing Ralph Reed, the Executive Director of the Coalition: "[E]verybody says, that in fact nobody could win the nomination for the Republicans for the next election—November 1996—without the support of the Christian Coalition, or certainly with the opposition of the Christian Coalition."<sup>25</sup>

The need for a theory of responsible environmentalism that will motivate this new and powerful force in American politics is quickly becoming self-evident. To date, conservative Christian groups such as the Christian Coalition have remained silent on environmental matters. None of the ten points in the "Contract With the American Family" speaks to environmental issues, although the Coalition's general call for smaller government and support of the Republican "Contract With America" implies support for Republican proposals to reduce environmental regulation, weaken the Clean Water Act and wetlands protection, reduce the budget of the Environmental Protection Agency, and require agencies to pay compensation to landowners whose property is devalued by as little as twenty percent by environmental regulation.<sup>26</sup> Of the more than 1500 newspaper articles appearing in major United States newspapers since April 1994 that mention the Christian Coalition, very few simultaneously mention environmental matters,<sup>27</sup> and those that do often demonstrate that the Coalition is at least indirectly opposed to traditional environmental protection efforts or to candidates labeled environmentalists.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Niebuhr, *supra* note 11, at A09; O'Keefe, *supra* note 14, at A08.

<sup>25</sup> Frost, *supra* note 15, at 2. Reed responded that he did not make this assumption; rather, he believes it would be "temporarily flattering" but a "long-term mistake" for the Coalition to "try and position themselves in that way." *Id.* Former Republican presidential candidate and Senator Arlen Specter, who is Jewish, calls the religious right "the far-right fringe" in the GOP and believes the group's strength within the party is overestimated. He states: "I'm talking about people who want to use politics as a holy war. I do not call them 'Christian' or 'religious' because they do not articulate religious or Christian or Judeo-Christian principles." Richard Benedetto, *Specter Taking the Next Step Up: Senator Carves Moderate Niche in GOP Lineup*, USA TODAY, Mar. 30, 1995, at 4A.

<sup>26</sup> See Tom Kenworthy, *House Passes Landowner Rights Bill; Environment Enforcers Would Be Restrained*, WASH. POST, Mar. 4, 1995, at A01; Gary Lee, *House Passes Rewrite of Water Act; Measure Would Ease Industry Compliance*, WASH. POST, May 17, 1995, at A01. President Clinton has threatened to veto the measures. See Ann Devroy, *Veto Vowed For Clean Water Act Rewrite*, WASH. POST, May 31, 1995, at A07.

<sup>27</sup> This information was gathered from a search (christian +2 coalition & environment!) run in the WESTLAW database PAPERS-C (issues of combined major United States newspapers from Jan. 1, 1993 to date) on July 12, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> See William Booth, *Southern Officials Switching Sides: Former Democratic Bastion Be-*

The Christian right, however, has made no express disavowal of environmental responsibility. To the contrary, the Coalition's positions on other matters not directly linked to moral issues, such as a balanced budget amendment and welfare reform, often are based on a theory of Christian involvement in politics that should lead the Coalition to protect the environment. The budget should be balanced, for instance, because Christians have a fiscal and moral duty to future generations.<sup>29</sup> A similar view of environmental responsibility grounded in biblical literature illuminates the moral components of environmental protection, such as intergenerational responsibility, which responsible Christians must address.

A study by sociologist Andrew Greely concluded that "[w]hen background variables were taken into account, and all the religious variables entered into the equation, the crucial predictor of lower levels of environmental concern was belief in the literal interpretation of the Bible."<sup>30</sup> Greely found that Jews and other nonChristians were more likely to support increased spending on environmental concerns than were Christians, and that Catholics were more inclined to spend on environmental protection than were Protestants.<sup>31</sup> He found no

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coming GOP Stronghold, WASH. POST, Mar. 16, 1995, at A01 (discussing recent Republican successes in Anderson County, South Carolina, where the Christian Coalition is very active and "much of the politics . . . begins in the big churches" where many of the Republican voters who congregate "do not like environmentalists or gun control"); Richard Tapscott, *As Vote Nears, Early Favorites Getting a Run For the Money*, WASH. POST, Nov. 6, 1994, at B01 (discussing gubernatorial race in Maryland between Parris Glendening and Ellen Sauerbrey, where Glendening gained support from "gun-control advocates, labor and abortion-rights and environmental groups" and Sauerbrey "got help from the National Rifle Association and members of the Christian Coalition"); see also Nancy Petersen, *Race Pits a Star vs. an Opponent Who Hopes To Shoot Him Down*, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, Oct. 21, 1994, at B04 (discussing record of Pennsylvania Congressman Robert S. Walker: "Seniors, consumers, labor interests, environmentalists, and abortion-rights activists rate him close to the bottom, and groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Christian Coalition give him their highest grade."); Richard Wolf, *Groups Adapt To Fight Budget War*, USA TODAY, May 18, 1995, at 12A (listing the Christian Coalition as an "in" power group, and environmental groups as "out").

<sup>29</sup> When David Frost noted that some find it "bewildering" that such issues have a moral component Reed responded:

I wouldn't argue that there was a moral or religious component in NAFTA, and we didn't work on NAFTA. But if you were to ask me where is the moral or religious component in a balanced budget amendment, *I would argue that the moral component is that you don't take your own profligacy and saddle the debt or the profligacy on your children and grandchildren.* I believe that's not only fiscally wrong; I think it's immoral.

Frost, *supra* note 15, at 4 (emphasis added).

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Greely, *Religion and Attitudes Toward the Environment*, 32 J. FOR SCI. STUDY RELIGION 19, 19 (1993).

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 22.

significant variation between the major branches of Protestantism.<sup>32</sup> Greeley's conclusions, after taking into account views of the Bible, religious imagery (such as whether the respondent viewed God as a mother-spouse or a father-king figure), and political liberalism or conservatism, were stated as follows:

Those who are not Christian, in other words, are more likely to support environmental concerns because they are younger, better educated, and have a more liberal political agenda and a more benign story of God. The first three variables are not specifically religious.

Catholics are more likely to be concerned about the environment because they are more likely to have gracious images of God, and because their picture of God is more likely to affect their environmental concern than is the Protestants' picture of God.<sup>33</sup>

But Greeley's study includes insight into how this preconception can be changed:

If harsh religious images and political and ethical conservatism are removed from the "style," in real people or in a multiple regression equation, the lower level of environmental concern disappears.

The Bible, it might be argued not unreasonably, is not the cause of lower support for environmental spending; it is rather the pretext of those whose rigid "style" inclines them both to resist environmental concern and insist on religious certainty.<sup>34</sup>

In the final analysis, the relationship between religion and environmental concern "depends on the imaginative contents and on the political and ethical correlations of a person's religious story." Therefore, "[i]n the United States the correlations between religion and environmental attitudes seem to be spurious."<sup>35</sup>

If, despite Greeley's findings, the religious story of Protestantism, the imagery of the religion, can be reinterpreted to require environmental protection, then the strength and rigor of the religious holdings of those denominations, the very tenacity with which Protestants demand religious certainty and adhere to the dictates of the father-king God, could be trained toward environmental protection instead of creating the aversion noted by Greeley. The important matter is the correct interpretation of the Scriptures. That correct interpreta-

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<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> *Id.* at 26.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.* at 27.

<sup>35</sup> Greeley, *supra* note 30, at 27.

tion should turn Protestant churches into strong protectors of the environment.

### C. *Purpose and Method*

This Article develops a theory of environmental protection based on an exegesis of Scripture in order to illuminate the responsibility of politically active Christians toward the environment. In presentation and method, this Article depends on biblical texts and the analytical structures familiar to the evangelical or "low-church" Protestant tradition.<sup>36</sup>

There are three defining elements of the low-church Protestant tradition that shape the method of this investigation: (i) a dependence on confessional theology;<sup>37</sup> (ii) acceptance of the Bible as the final authority in spiritual matters; and (iii) the belief that every Christian "stands equally before Christ," needs no priestly intermediary, and

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<sup>36</sup> Richard Rodriguez, a contributor to the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, has noted that "[i]n truth, America is not a christian [sic] country. America is more precisely a Protestant country, more precisely still a low church Protestant country." Richard Rodriguez, *Spiritual Roots, The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* (PBS television broadcast, Dec. 27, 1994) (transcript #5128 at 16). Rodriguez is speaking not of religion that permeates American society, but of ideals of democracy, self-determination, and tolerance that became a part of the American fabric largely through the efforts of low church Protestant denominations (such as Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians). Rodriguez states: "[o]ur faith in individualism, our fear of the tyranny of the crowd, our sense of optimism, the Easter promise, the notion that you can cast off your old self and become someone new, all these beliefs derive from our Puritan forefathers." *Id.* Rodriguez continues: "[a]s a Roman Catholic, what has moved me about Protestantism, particularly low church Protestantism, has been the respect that it grants the individual against the group." *Id.* at 17. Rodriguez concludes:

[b]ecause America remains a low church Protestant country today, it is much more than a christian [sic] country. This is a nation home to Buddhists and Muslims and village atheists. We fret about the rights of the individual because we are Protestant. Because of our remarkable Protestant past, I grew up a Roman Catholic in America, careful to say, "Happy Hanukkah."

*Id.*

<sup>37</sup> A "confessional theological" approach relies primarily on simple exegesis of Scripture, whereas a "philosophical theological" approach interprets the Scriptures through the prism of classical, often platonic or neoplatonic, philosophy. H. PAUL SANTMIRE, *THE TRAVAIL OF NATURE* 55 (1985) [hereinafter *TRAVAIL OF NATURE*] (discussing Augustine of Hippo). Students of early Christian writers see an example of this dichotomy in theological works that originated from North African writers, often based in Carthage, (such as Tyconius, Augustine, and Tertullian) as compared to the early Christian Alexandrian school, home to Origen. *Id.* at 59 (citing Christopher Dawson, *St. Augustine and His Age*, *ENQUIRIES INTO RELIGION AND CULTURE* 234, 239 (1937)). Dawson regards Tyconius as a direct influence on Augustine, and says that Tyconius "represents the African tradition in its purest and most uncontaminated form. He owes nothing to classical culture or to philosophic ideas; his inspiration is entirely biblical and Hebraic." *Id.* (quoting Dawson, *supra* at 234).

must "work out [his or her own] salvation with fear and trembling."<sup>38</sup> The simplicity of belief and doctrine and the application of doctrine directly to day-to-day living are natural consequences of these elements of the Protestant evangelical faith.

The low-church Protestant tradition demands that the determination of how an evangelical Christian should view her duty toward the environment be made through an exegesis of the Scriptures. Since the tumultuous suggestion in 1967 by Lynn White, the Christian son of a Presbyterian minister,<sup>39</sup> that Christianity's influence on western civilization is largely to blame for today's environmental problems,<sup>40</sup> many have written either to defend Christianity's history of interaction with the environment or, more honestly, to admit Christianity's failure to obey the biblical instruction to protect the environment.<sup>41</sup> Authors have relied on the philosophies of St. Augustine and other early church fathers, scriptural "motifs," and doctrinal discussions in arguing that Christians owe a basic responsibility to the environment.<sup>42</sup> Some Christian denominations have undergone a "greening" in outlook,<sup>43</sup> but judging from the recent actions of the Republican

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<sup>38</sup> Phil. 2:12. Baptist scholar William Stevens explains this doctrine, known as "the priesthood of the believer," in these words: "[e]very believer stands equally before Christ. Every child of God has become so by grace. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. This fact as of necessity calls for a democratic setup; nothing else is permissible. There can be no spiritual hierarchy." WILLIAM W. STEVENS, *DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION* 305-08 (1967).

<sup>39</sup> David N. Livingstone, *Eco-Myths: Myth 1: The Church Is To Blame*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Apr. 4, 1994, at 21, 24.

<sup>40</sup> See Lynn White, Jr., *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*, 155 SCIENCE 1203, 1203 (1967).

<sup>41</sup> See generally JAMES A. NASH, *LOVING NATURE: ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY* (1991) [hereinafter JAMES NASH]; *TRAVAIL OF NATURE*, *supra* note 37. For a discussion of the Christian environmental movement in general, see RODERICK F. NASH, *The Greening of Religion*, in *THE RIGHTS OF NATURE: A HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS* 87 (1989) [hereinafter RODERICK NASH].

<sup>42</sup> See generally JAMES NASH, *supra* note 41 (using doctrinal topics); *TRAVAIL OF NATURE*, *supra* note 37 (using scriptural motifs). The purpose of James Nash's volume is to "show that a reasonably and modestly reformed Christian theology can provide in its central affirmations—and not simply in peripheral elements—an ultimate, sustaining foundation for ecological integrity." JAMES NASH, *supra* note 42, at 94. While focusing on seven theological issues, creation, covenant, the divine image and dominion, incarnation, spiritual presence, sin, divine judgment, cosmic redemption and the church, Nash recognizes that other interpreters will stress different issues, stating: "[t]hat is the nature of classical Christian diversity." *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> See RODERICK NASH, *supra* note 41, at 87. In 1994 a document titled *An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation* was signed by almost 150 Christian leaders, including 17 college and seminary presidents and representatives of groups such as the Christian College Coalition and Tyndale House, two large publishers of Bibles and Christian literature. The document was sponsored by the National Religious Partnership on the Environment, which includes Catholic, Jewish and evangelical groups. Randy Frame, *150 Sign "Care of Creation"*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Apr. 4, 1994, at 76.

Party despite the Christian right's influence in that Party, the efforts of Christian environmentalists to spread their message either have not reached or have not persuaded the Party.

Perhaps these earlier discussions of Christian responsibility did not plunge into the Scriptures deeply enough to persuade conservative Christians; perhaps the message simply did not reach that philosophical corner of Christendom; or, perhaps the flurry of Christian environmentalist responses to White's essay, published largely in the 1970s and 1980s, are a political generation removed from the current leaders of the Christian right and their priorities.<sup>44</sup> Regardless of the reason, the ascendance of the Christian right to a place of political influence in the United States precipitates a reanalysis of humankind's responsibility toward the environment in terms particular to evangelical Christianity. A meaningful evangelical Christian dialogue about responsibility to the environment must "go down 'to the deepest roots of Western religious sensibility and vocabulary.'"<sup>45</sup> For evangelical Christians, this means turning directly to the Bible for a fresh evaluation of our responsibility. The purpose of this Article is to encourage that process.<sup>46</sup>

## II. STARTING IN THE WRONG PLACE: THE ERRONEOUS VIEW OF BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY AS ANTI-ENVIRONMENT

For some Christians moving from the evangelical Christian model of religious training into the area of environmental and natural resources law and policy, the predominant reaction is shock upon learn-

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<sup>44</sup> Roderick Nash believes that the greening of the church has resulted from a combination of three methods: turning to Eastern and Asian faiths that had a sense of commitment to nature, turning to the traditions of the American Indians, and reinterpreting basic Judeo-Christian beliefs. RODERICK NASH, *supra* note 41, at 92. Nash, writing in 1989, stated that by the 1980's "[e]cotheology" ha[d] not only become a new word but a compelling world view." *Id.* at 120. Current evidence makes this conclusion suspect. Realistically, "ecotheology" has to this point been identified as a "liberal" or "extremist" idea, seldom seriously discussed or considered in the more fundamentalist/low-church Protestant corners of Christianity in America.

<sup>45</sup> TRAVAIL OF NATURE, *supra* note 37, at 5-6 (quoting Gordan Kaufman, *The Concept of Nature: A Problem for Theology*, 65 HARV. THEOLOGICAL REV. 337, 355 (1972)).

<sup>46</sup> To this end, a central aspect of this examination is the author's own investigation of the Scriptures. The result of this investigation is offered for consideration by other evangelical Protestants who, in the highest tradition of our faith, must then examine the Scriptures themselves to determine the instruction given there. In this process, it is necessary to single out certain passages and to emphasize those passages that demonstrate, to this author, the biblical, or theocentric, basis for environmentalism. Any other reader of the Bible almost certainly would construct a different list of important passages or topics. In the evangelical Christian tradition, that is only as it should be.

ing that Christianity has been blamed for the demise of the environment in the West.<sup>47</sup> It seems obvious to many readers of the Bible that both the biblical narrative and the principles that narrative translates into human experience mandate at the very least a reasonable degree of concern for the environment.<sup>48</sup> But the reader of environmental ethics quickly learns that most literature considering the impact of religion on the environment quickly identifies itself in relation to Professor White's 1967 essay that placed the problems of our current ecology squarely on the shoulders of western Christianity.<sup>49</sup>

White's essay raised two immediate questions: (i) does the Bible really provide mankind a license to dominate the earth without care as to the consequences of its actions?; and (ii) regardless of what the Bible teaches, has Christianity, in the form of the organized church or individual Christians, promoted environmentally harmful policies? The answer to the second question could be "yes," even if the answer to the first question is "no." That would mean only that Christians and Christianity have ignored a biblical mandate of environmental responsibility. In answering the first question, it is helpful to review the history of the criticism of the Bible and of Christianity by three prominent writers: Aldo Leopold, Lynn White, and John Passmore.

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<sup>47</sup> See SUSAN P. BRATTON, CHRISTIANITY, WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE 15-16 (1993) [hereinafter CHRISTIANITY, WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE].

<sup>48</sup> J. Baird Callicott argues that from John Muir's earliest writings, the founder of the Sierra Club recognized the ecological problems fostered by some interpretations of the Scriptures. Muir countered with his own interpretation, excoriating the erroneous interpreters of Genesis rather than the creation story itself. J. Baird Callicott, *Genesis Revisited: Murian [sic] Musings on the Lynn White, Jr. Debate*, 14 ENVTL. HIST. REV. 65, 68-71 (1990).

More recently, Calvin DeWitt, director of the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies, which conducts college courses at Christian colleges in science and environmental stewardship, argues that "when Christians read the Bible with 'ecological eyeglasses,' they find a theology of creation leaps out at them. . . . 'In light of our new understandings in ecology, we see the whole of the Scriptures proclaiming the kingdom in an ecological vision.'" Kristi G. Streiffert, *The Earth Groans, and Christians Are Listening*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Sept. 22, 1989, at 38-39.

<sup>49</sup> See White, *supra* note 40, at 1203. The vast majority of works published since 1967 considering religion's place in the environmental discussion begin by citing White. See, e.g., JAMES NASH, *supra* note 41, at 69; H. PAUL SANTMIRE, BROTHER EARTH: NATURE, GOD AND ECOLOGY IN TIME OF CRISIS 6 (1970); Robert H. Ayers, *Christian Realism and Environmental Ethics*, in RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS 154 (Eugene C. Hargrove ed., 1986); Susan P. Bratton, *Christian Ecotheology and the Old Testament*, in RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS 53 (Eugene C. Hargrove ed., 1986) [hereinafter *Christian Ecotheology*]; Eric Katz, *Judaism and the Ecological Crisis*, in WORLDVIEWS AND ECOLOGY: RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT 55, 56 (Mary Evelyn Tucker & John A. Grim eds., 1994); Martin LaBar, *A Biblical Perspective on Nonhuman Organisms: Values, Moral Considerability, and Moral Agency*, in RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS 76 n.1 (Eugene C. Hargrove, ed. 1986).

A. Aldo Leopold, *The Ten Commandments and First Ethics*

The focus on Lynn White's 1967 essay has led commentators to ignore the implications for religion of the much earlier work of Aldo Leopold, whose 1949 call for a land ethic was, in his view, a call to correct the failures of past ethical systems such as the Ten Commandments.<sup>50</sup> Briefly stated, Leopold argued that civilization had created a "first ethic" of relationships between individuals and a "second ethic" of relationships between individuals and society, while neglecting an essential "third ethic" of relationships between man and nature, a "land ethic."<sup>51</sup> Leopold states: "[t]he first ethics dealt with the relation between individuals; the Mosaic Decalogue is an example. Later accretions dealt with the relations between the individual and society. The Golden Rule tries to integrate the individual to society; democracy to integrate social organization to the individual."<sup>52</sup> Leopold believed that Judeo-Christian tradition, or mankind's synthesis of that tradition into society as symbolized by the Decalogue and the Golden Rule, had failed to produce the ethic necessary to conserve the natural order: "There is yet no ethic dealing with man's relationship to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. . . . The extension of ethics to this third element in human environment is, if I read the evidence correctly, an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity."<sup>53</sup> Leopold noted that "[i]ndividual thinkers since the days of Ezekiel and Isaiah have asserted that the despoliation of land is not

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<sup>50</sup> See ALDO LEOPOLD, *A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC* 202 (spec. comm. ed. 1987).

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> *Id.* at 202-03.

<sup>53</sup> *Id.* at 203. Leopold believed that the creation of the Mosaic Decalogue similarly was an evolutionary process, contrary to the biblical account. He wrote: "[o]nly the most superficial student of history supposes that Moses 'wrote' the Decalogue; it evolved in the minds of a thinking community, and Moses wrote a tentative summary of it for a 'seminar.'" *Id.* at 225.

For the biblical Christian, a study of "history," as Leopold calls his understanding of social evolution, does not supplant or substitute for God's specific interventions in human history described in the Bible, especially for such a pivotal point in biblical history as the delivery of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. See *Exod.* 19-20.

To the Christian, "[t]he Bible tells history as a series of God's acts in which He interacts with people to reveal Himself and His saving will for them. . . . The story of Israel derives from God's activity. History is the medium through which God chooses to reveal Himself." Christ Church, *History*, *THE HOLMAN BIBLE DICTIONARY* 650-51 (1991). This perspective is the basis of the German theological term "Heilsgeschichte," which is translated "salvation history." See Alan Richardson, *Salvation*, *THE INTERPRETER'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE* 168, 171 (1962) ("It was a particular series of historical events, through a particular national history, that God's saving purpose in Jesus Christ was fulfilled."). Statements such as Leopold's denigrate the mental ability or intellectual honesty of people of faith and alienate Christians from the envi-

only inexpedient but wrong,"<sup>54</sup> but he concluded that the heir to these thinkers had failed to integrate these thoughts into an ethic of conservation.<sup>55</sup> Thus, he saw the Judeo-Christian tradition as a stile passed along the way to a new land ethic, not as a foundation for that ethic.

### B. Lynn White and *The Creation Story*

White looks not to the Mosaic Decalogue but to the Judeo-Christian story of creation found in Genesis for the root of what flowered during the Middle Ages as man's position of dominance over nature.<sup>56</sup> White argues that the rise of Christianity over animistic paganism and the development of agricultural tools and methods that allowed more than mere subsistence farming created a new balance of power between man and nature: "Formerly man had been part of nature; now he was the exploiter of nature."<sup>57</sup> To this process Christianity contributed the teaching that mankind progresses through linear time to a higher state of existence (as opposed to Greco-Roman philosophy that emphasized neither progress nor linear time), the freedom from devotion to the nature gods of wood and spring that animistic religions favored, and the theory of a discreet temporal beginning of the universe.<sup>58</sup> The third contribution is found in Genesis, and as White interprets the creation story:

God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image.<sup>59</sup>

White concludes with the startling statement that Christianity "not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends."<sup>60</sup>

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ronmental movement. Ultimately, such chauvinistic "post-Christian" biases create Christian reactionary movements like the Christian Coalition.

<sup>54</sup> LEOPOLD, *supra* note 50, at 203.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

<sup>56</sup> White, *supra* note 40, at 1205.

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*

<sup>60</sup> *Id.*

C. *John Passmore and the Seeds of Hope*

Instead of placing blame on one cultural heritage or another for environmental degradation, John Passmore, in his *Man's Responsibility For Nature*,<sup>61</sup> seeks to counter White's conclusion that the cultural tradition of the West does not include an adequate philosophical basis for environmentalism. Passmore blames Christian theologians such as Calvin for teaching that the physical creation existed solely for humankind's benefit.<sup>62</sup> Passmore notes that Judaism and the writings of the Old Testament, on the other hand, hold creation to be made for the glory of God and thus create a responsibility of stewardship on the part of the believer.<sup>63</sup> According to Passmore, critics are correct to say that Christianity "encouraged man to think of himself as nature's absolute master, for whom everything that exists was designed. They are wrong only in supposing that this is also the Hebrew teaching; it originates with the Greeks."<sup>64</sup> Passmore's important divergence from White is his emphasis that a new theory of moral responsibility and of responsibility toward nature in the West can be effective in changing individual actions only if the theory is an enhancement or extension of a venerable tradition, rather than the radical new philosophy that White suggests is necessary. In this way, Rose and Passmore are attempting to tap the same source of preexisting cultural narrative authority. Passmore states:

the degree to which their reforms [those of statesmen, prophets or individual reformers] have been in the long run successful depends on the degree to which they have been able to appeal to and further develop already existing traditions. The fact that the West has never been wholly committed to the view that man has no responsibility whatsoever for the maintenance and preservation of the world around him is important just because it means that there are "seeds" in the Western tradition which the reformer can hope to bring into full flower.<sup>65</sup>

From White to Passmore the search for a Christian environmental ethic moved from near hopelessness to hopeful ambiguity. For Pass-

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<sup>61</sup> JOHN PASSMORE, *MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR NATURE* (1974).

<sup>62</sup> *Id.* at 12-13.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

<sup>64</sup> *Id.* at 13. Passmore argues that this view of nature arose after the Greek Enlightenment: "One then finds it explicitly maintained that animal life exists purely and simply for man's sake." *Id.* (citing Aristotle's *POLITICS*).

<sup>65</sup> *Id.* at 40 (footnote omitted).

more, at least the "seeds" of an environmentally responsible ethic exist in the western Christian tradition. But Passmore finds it difficult, if not impossible, to rely on Scripture to develop a western environmental tradition. While acknowledging that a theme of Christian stewardship of creation has arisen in more recent Christian interpretation, Passmore nevertheless concludes that there is little biblical evidence to support the stewardship ethic, since most of the New Testament stewardship images speak of duty to the Church rather than to the physical creation.<sup>66</sup>

### III. STARTING WITH THE SCRIPTURES: THE MISTAKEN PREMISES OF LEOPOLD, WHITE, AND PASSMORE

Leopold, White, and Passmore represent challenges to the evangelical Christian attempting to develop a biblical basis for environmentalism. But for the evangelical Christian entering the environmental arena, to begin with these writings, venerable though they are in the environmental community, is to start in the wrong place. For an evangelical Christian, a review of the Scriptures themselves provides a better starting point. Such a study must seek to avoid the preconceived notion that the Bible supports either an anthropocentric or a biocentric view of the environment.

#### A. *The Mosaic Decalogue*

Leopold's assessment of the Ten Commandments mistakenly replaces the most prominent element of the Decalogue, the allegiance mankind owes to God, with an ethic of relations between individuals. Contrary to Leopold's assessment, the "first ethic" imposed by the Ten Commandments deals not with relationships between individuals, but with the relationship between mankind and God. This was Leopold's crucial oversight,<sup>67</sup> for each of the first four Commandments teaches of the primacy of the individual's relationship to God.<sup>68</sup> Only against

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<sup>66</sup> PASSMORE, *supra* note 61, at 29.

<sup>67</sup> Passmore correctly notes Leopold's oversight, but offers the explanation that Leopold did not mention man's responsibility to God because to do so "would have impaired the triune simplicity of his analysis." *Id.* at 4.

<sup>68</sup> *Exod.* 20:3-10. The first four Commandments state:  
You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. . . .

this backdrop of priority and purpose can the remaining Commandments, indeed, the remainder of the Bible, be understood. The covenant that God created with Moses and the descendants of Israel demanded obedience to God as its condition precedent. Through the first four Commandments, that Biblical "first ethic" of obedience to God, theocentricity becomes the basis for every decision and action of the believer. If care for the environment is dictated by other Scriptures, then that responsibility becomes an element of the "first ethic" of a Christian's existence, his duty to obey and worship God, not a third ethic yet to be developed, as Leopold proposed.

### B. *The Creation Story of Genesis*

#### 1. The Fall of Man Through Abuse of Nature

White<sup>69</sup> argues that the Genesis creation story sought to justify mankind's dominance of nature:<sup>70</sup> "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and

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You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work. . . .

*Id.* The latter six Commandments instruct individuals to honor their parents and to abstain from murder, adultery, stealing, lying, and covetousness. *Id.* at 12–17.

<sup>69</sup> See White, *supra* note 40, at 1207. Other writers on this subject are fond of repeating White's argument that the first chapter of Genesis gives humankind the right to dominate nature to the point of insensible destruction. See, e.g., Partridge, *supra* note 7, at 103 n.4; Wallace Stegner, *It All Began With Conservation*, SMITHSONIAN, Apr. 1990, at 35. Stegner's comment is an example of the misleading citations to Genesis, with no further discussion or analysis, that are common:

Our sanction to be a weed species living at the expense of every other species and of Earth itself can be found in the injunction God gave to newly created Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. . . . But what we are working toward, what with luck we may eventually attain to, is an outlook that was frequently and sometimes eloquently expressed by the first inhabitants of this continent. The Indians stressed the web of life, the interconnectedness of man and creature.

*Id.* at 35. Stegner fails to note God's command to the Israelites very early in biblical history, long before Native Americans were discussing the environmental philosophy of the ravaging white man: "The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me." *Lev.* 25:23.

<sup>70</sup> Roderick Nash correctly notes that White wrote as a historian, not as a theologian, and that his purpose was to demonstrate how Christians had interpreted and used the Scriptures to justify an exploitative dominion over nature. RODERICK NASH, *supra* note 41, at 89. Although some viewed White's essay as heretical, it was White who in the same essay foresaw the greening of the church and Rose's call for a narrative of moral suasion by stating: "[s]ince the

subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."<sup>71</sup>

The multifaceted Hebrew verbs translated as "subdue" and "dominion" in most English versions of the Bible have received much scholarly comment.<sup>72</sup> As with many Hebrew terms, the English translations are far from equivalents.<sup>73</sup> Commentaries not involved in environmental debates have noted that the type of dominion to be exercised by mankind is colored and limited by the following statement that mankind was created in the image of God: "As the image of God, human beings should relate to the nonhuman as God relates to them."<sup>74</sup> As Davies explains:

The image is not a thing in itself. It has to be seen, apprehended as it is in the dominion. . . . The effect of this view therefore is to leave the character of the image without definition but to see the content and issue of the image in the endowment of dominion. So the image points to dominion, as dominion testifies to the presence of the image. So closely are they joined that one could suppose the loss of one would mean the loss of the other and vice versa.<sup>75</sup>

Dominion creates responsibility because when mankind assumes dominion, it does so in God's image and as God's vizier on earth.<sup>76</sup>

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roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not." White, *supra* note 40, at 1207.

<sup>71</sup> *Gen.* 1:28 (KJV). The NASB uses the verb "rule over" instead of "have dominion over" and the verb "fill" instead of "replenish."

<sup>72</sup> See, e.g., Terence E. Fretheim, *Genesis*, 1 THE NEW INTERPRETER'S BIBLE 346 (1994).

<sup>73</sup> *Id.*

<sup>74</sup> *Id.*

<sup>75</sup> G. Henton Davies, *Genesis*, 1 THE BROADMAN BIBLE COMMENTARY 131-32 (1969).

<sup>76</sup> *Id.* at 132. Jewish interpretations of the verse are similar. Eric Katz cites two medieval Jewish scholars, Nachmanides and Sforno, who interpreted "subdue the earth" narrowly to allow the use, but not the destruction, of natural resources. See Katz, *supra* note 49, at 57. He quotes Sforno's explanation as allowing only self-preservation: "And subdue it—that you protect yourself with your reason and prevent the animals from entering within your boundaries and you rule over them." *Id.* at 57 (emphasis in original). Katz concludes: "[t]hese interpretations recognize the power of humanity to use natural resources, and indeed the necessity of them so doing, but they emphasize limitations in the human role. Dominion here does not mean unrestricted domination." *Id.*

Katz also retells a story ascribed to the medieval Spanish rabbi Jonah ibn Janah:

A man walks into a house in the midst of a deserted city; he finds a table with food and drink and begins to eat, thinking to himself, "I deserve all this, it is mine, I will act as I please." Little does he know that the owners are watching him, and that he will have to pay for all that he consumes.

*Id.* at 59-60 (citing David Ehrenfeld & Philip J. Bentley, *Judaism and the Practice of Steward-*

Kings want their viziers to act as the King would act. The parable of the unmerciful steward sketches the type of vizier God expects mankind to be.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, in the context of the "dominion" of the earth commanded in Genesis 1:28, the command "must be understood in terms of care-giving, even nurturing, not exploitation."<sup>78</sup> To act otherwise is to invite the fate of the unmerciful steward.<sup>79</sup>

In his brief essay, White does not analyze the context of verse 28 of Genesis 1<sup>80</sup> or, more importantly, the end of the story that verse 28

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ship, 34 JUDAISM 301-02 (1985)); see also *Luke* 12:19-21 (Jesus's parable of the man who unwisely put his faith in material wealth to the exclusion of faith in God).

<sup>77</sup> The parable states:

[f]or this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything." And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.

But that slave went out and found one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, "Pay back what you owe." So his fellow-slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, "Have patience with me and I will repay you." He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

So when his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, "You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow-slave, even as I had mercy on you?" And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.

*Matt.* 18:23-35.

<sup>78</sup> Fretheim, *supra* note 72, at 346.

<sup>79</sup> See *Matt.* 18:23-35. Bratton makes a similar point in regard to God's placement of man in the garden to "cultivate it and care for it." *Gen.* 2:15. Bratton states:

[t]his passage does not give a portrait of man called to be despot, but presents man as called to serve. The verb *abad*, translated as "to till" [in the KJV], has the connotation not only of work but of service, and can be translated as "to serve" or "to be a slave to." The word *shamar*, "to keep," might also be translated "to watch" or "to preserve."

CHRISTIANITY, WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE, *supra* note 47, at 293 (citing LOREN WILKINSON, ED., *EARTH KEEPING: CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES* 209 (1980)).

<sup>80</sup> See generally White, *supra* note 40. Bratton discusses the biblical context of creation theology:

Creation theology might be better termed the "creation theme" and seen as one of many theological strands, intimately connected to the other themes that combine to make Old Testament theology. In pursuing the creation theme one cannot depend solely on the first few chapters of Genesis, nor can one ignore the wisdom literature. Many writers who have tackled the question of the adequacy of Judeo-Christian environmental ethics have relied on one or two passages of Scripture and may thus have misunderstood the total thrust of the scriptural texts.

*Christian Ecotheology*, *supra* note 49, at 56.

begins. White, while ignoring the story's context, hypothesized that by allowing man the prerogative of naming the animals,<sup>81</sup> God declared all of creation made "explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes."<sup>82</sup> White's primary error is the same as Leopold's: the failure to account for biblical context.

Contrary to White's assumption, the tragic ending of the Garden of Eden story occurs precisely because mankind refused to recognize that God *did not* give mankind dominion over every aspect of creation:

And out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."<sup>83</sup>

White, and those Christians whose attitude he is describing, overlook a central tenet of Christianity: that all creation, *including humankind*, is created by God for God's use.<sup>84</sup> From the very beginning, God

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For example, the two verses following *Gen.* 1:28 demonstrate that the primary meaning of verse 28, in regard to humankind's dominance over nature, is that humankind is allowed to use nature as food:

Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so.

*Gen.* 1:29-30. Animals are not initially included as a food source for humankind; thus, the pre-fall state of vegetarianism is sometimes considered a more perfect, peaceful state than that including man and other animals as carnivores. Walter R. Bowie, *Genesis: Exposition*, in *THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE* 486; Cuthbert A. Simpson, *Genesis: Exegesis*, 1 *THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE* 486. Cf. *Isa.* 11:6, *Hos.* 2:18, which portray the coming kingdom of God as a completely vegetarian existence, with *Gen.* 9:3, listing animals as a food source.

<sup>81</sup> White, *supra* note 40, at 1205; see *Gen.* 2:19.

<sup>82</sup> White, *supra* note 40, at 1205; see *Gen.* 2:19 (the naming of the animals).

<sup>83</sup> *Gen.* 2:9, 16-17 (KJV).

<sup>84</sup> A startling image of the extent of God's own dominion over human creation is God's command to Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a human sacrifice. See *Gen.* 22:1-2. God stopped Abraham short of killing the child, but the emphasis of the story is that God required of Abraham obedience and sacrifice that extended even over the life of his child. See *Gen.* 1-19; see also *Exod.* 12:29-30, where, after nine plagues failed to convince the Egyptian Pharaoh to

created rules binding humankind's interaction with nonhuman creation.<sup>85</sup> When humankind disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God's reaction was swift and strong:

And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

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["Cursed is the ground because of you;  
In toil you shall eat of it  
All the days of your life.  
Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;  
And you shall eat the plants of the field;  
By the sweat of your face  
You shall eat bread,  
Till you return to the ground,  
Because from it you were taken;  
For you are dust,  
And to dust you shall return."

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So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.<sup>86</sup>

When humankind disobeyed the basic rule of its relationship with God, obedience, it did so by breaking a rule *concerning the use of nature*: Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree that was forbidden to them.<sup>87</sup> The history of Christianity could not point more dramatically to the importance of nonhuman creation within God's order than by casting the factual basis of original sin as the abuse of nature.

If commentators insist on transmuting God's creation of man into an establishment of unaccountable dominance over nature, intellectual honesty requires that God be given credit for banishing man from Eden when he "abused nature" by eating the fruit that he was

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release the Hebrew slaves, the Angel of Death visited every Egyptian household, taking the life of the firstborn. Christian environmentalism should not be mistaken for environmentalism for the environment's sake; rather, it is environmentalism born of obedience to God as part of the relationship of creation to Creator that humankind shares with nonhuman creation.

<sup>85</sup> Bratton notes the preeminence of this theme in theological interpretations of *Genesis*: "Although many environmental commentators begin the discussion of Judeo-Christian ecotheology with the question of man's dominion, most Old Testament commentators begin the discussion of creation theology with an investigation of God as creator." *Christian Ecotheology*, *supra* note 49, at 57.

<sup>86</sup> *Gen.* 3:11, 17(b)–19, 24.

<sup>87</sup> *Id.* 3.

not allowed to eat. Even reading Genesis chapters one through three as a story about ecology rather than a story of humankind's relationship to God, the story tells of God meting out a terrible punishment (death) for disobedience through the misuse of nature (sin), thereby binding humankind inextricably to the natural environment that would now outlast any individual's life span.<sup>88</sup> Prior to the fall, humankind would have lived without death—the tree of life was not forbidden to Adam and Eve—and with the assurance that nature automatically would provide human sustenance.<sup>89</sup> But now that humankind has abused nature, he who formerly was given dominion over the earth will be forced to sweat to gain sustenance from nature.<sup>90</sup> Humankind now has no choice but to remember its connection to the earth, the earth that was its beginning and will be its end,<sup>91</sup> as God's curse rings in its ears:

For you are dust,  
And to dust you shall return.<sup>92</sup>

The absence of humankind's domination as a theme in the remainder of the Old and New Testaments reflects the loss of humankind's status as dominator of the earth. Moreover, James Nash states that

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<sup>88</sup> See *id.* 3:11, 17(b)–19, 24.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *id.* 1–2 with *id.* 3.

<sup>90</sup> Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr illuminates the connection between the shift in humankind's status after the fall and environmental problems caused by the overuse and indefinite extension of finite resources when he states: "[g]reed is in short the expression of man's inordinate ambition to hide his insecurity in nature." REINHOLD NIEBUHR, 1 *THE NATURE AND DESTINY OF MAN* 190–91 (1949). In biblical terms, that insecurity is born of humankind's disobedience to God and the resulting estrangement from God and dependence on God's nonhuman creation.

<sup>91</sup> The writer of Ecclesiastes also describes man's destiny after the fall as entwined with the remainder of creation:

For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.

*Ecc.* 3:19–20. See LaBar, *supra* note 49, at 83 (noting that this passage demonstrates a "unity of life" between humankind and nonhuman organisms).

<sup>92</sup> *Gen.* 3:19(c). The inextricable relationship between man and nature is foreshadowed by the Genesis author's Hebrew terminology:

In 'adam "man" and 'dama "soil, ground" there is an obvious play on words, a practice which the Bible shares with other ancient literatures. This should not, however, be mistaken for mere punning. Names were regarded not only as labels but also as symbols, magical keys as it were to the nature and essence of the given being or thing. . . . The closest approach in English to the juxtaposition of the Hebrew nouns before us might be "earthling: earth."

E.A. SPEISER, *Genesis*, 1 *THE ANCHOR BIBLE* § 2 at 16 (1964).

the idea of humankind's dominion had no "significance in the rest of the Old Testament" and "is absent from the New Testament."<sup>93</sup>

## 2. Ramifications of the Creation Story

This theocentric environmental view of the creation story leads to two doctrines that demand environmentally responsible action on the part of the Christian. These doctrines are not responses to any sense of environmental crisis, but were embraced by the Christian Church, and the Jewish tradition before it, long before care for God's creation became environmentalism. First, the interplay between God, humankind, and nature, in the Garden of Eden demonstrates that, while man may be God's vizier on the earth, he has strict responsibilities and limitations mandated directly by the heavenly King.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, even if "vizier" accurately portrays humankind's pre-fall position and "domination of nature" its role, "tenant" is a more apt description of its post-fall status and "obedience to God" a description of its purpose, the purpose humankind failed to fulfill while in Eden.<sup>95</sup> Second, the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual aspects of God's creation and the responsibilities given humankind pertinent to both aspects demonstrate that humankind cannot forsake the care of physical creation in pursuit of spiritual development.

### a. *All Creation is God's, and Humankind Is a Tenant*

White correctly stated that biblical religion differs from that of the classical world by viewing God and nature as separate entities.<sup>96</sup> But the elements of Israel's religion, and the source of its distinctiveness, resided in that very separateness of God.<sup>97</sup> Professor Bright explains:

Yahweh . . . was a God of wholly different type. He was identified with no natural force, nor was he localized at any point in heaven or on earth. Though controlling the elements (Judg. 5:4f., 21) and the heavenly bodies (Josh. 10:12f.), and riding the wings of the storm (Ps. 29), he was neither a sun-god, nor a moon-god, nor a storm-god. And though conferring the blessings of fertility (Gen. 49:25f.; Deut. 33:13-16), he was in no sense a fertility god. Yahweh

<sup>93</sup> JAMES NASH, *supra* note 41, at 102.

<sup>94</sup> See Gen. 3.

<sup>95</sup> See W.D. DAVIES, *THE GOSPEL AND THE LAND* 27 (1974) (the understanding "that the land belongs to Yahweh himself, persisted throughout the Old Testament and beyond it").

<sup>96</sup> See *supra* text at note 48.

<sup>97</sup> JOHN BRIGHT, *A HISTORY OF ISRAEL* 161 (3d ed. 1981) (footnote omitted).

was powerful over all of nature, but no one aspect of it was more characteristic of him than was another. In Israel's faith nature, though not thought of as lifeless, was robbed of personality and "demythed."<sup>98</sup>

Thus, for the Israelite, God was not equal to nature, He was in charge of nature.<sup>99</sup> Humankind's relationship to nature, therefore, incorporates both the controlling and the caring aspects of God's relationship to nature, and each element of the humankind-nature relationship exists strictly within the larger context of humankind's subservience to God. The most explicit statement of this relationship between God, humankind, and nonhuman creation is found in the law given to the Israelites through Moses as they moved from slavery in Egypt to the possession of Canaan: "[t]he land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me."<sup>100</sup> In the same chapter of Leviticus, God instructs the Israelites very specifically concerning how the land is to be treated, commanding that the land is to "keep" or "have" a sabbath year every seven years.<sup>101</sup> During this seventh year, God requires: "you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard. Your harvest's aftergrowth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; the land shall have a sabbatical year."<sup>102</sup> Every fiftieth year also was proclaimed a year of jubilee, in which no planting or harvesting would be allowed.<sup>103</sup> God specifically commanded how His tenants would steward His creation.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Id.*

<sup>99</sup> *See id.*

<sup>100</sup> *Lev.* 25:23.

<sup>101</sup> The KJV translates the verb as "keep," while the NASB uses "have." *Compare Lev.* 25:2-4 with *Lev.* 25:2-4 (KJV).

<sup>102</sup> *Lev.* 25:4-5. Although there is little doubt that these agricultural practices benefitted the owners of the land by avoiding soil depletion, LaBar's conclusion is that biblical writers considered nonhuman organisms to have moral worth, that is, to be "morally considerable," to the point that man was instructed in Genesis to care for the nonhuman elements of creation "simply because they are alive" and "without any apparent reference to their usefulness to man." LaBar, *supra* note 49, at 88, 90.

<sup>103</sup> *Lev.* 25:8-12.

<sup>104</sup> At least as the KJV translates *Lev.* 25:2, God commands "the land" to keep the sabbath. Davies suggests two possible readings; either "the land, too, owes worship to Yahweh, to signify that special relationship which it enjoys with him," or the commandment is "an encouragement to the Israelites to show proper respect to the soil and to use it wisely to assure its continued productivity." Davies, *supra* note 75, at 29 (citing I-II J. PEDERSEN, *ISRAEL: ITS LIFE AND CULTURE* 480 (1926)).

Davies also notes Leviticus 20:22-26, where God tells the Israelites to obey His commandments so that the chosen land will not "spew you out." In Leviticus 18:24-30, God's expression

The similarity between the treatment of the human and the nonhuman creation continues in the Mosaic instructions concerning the Pentateuch's system of personal bankruptcy, at least for Israelites:

And if a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave's service. He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner with you, until the year of jubilee. He shall then go out from you, he and his sons with him, . . . *For they are My servants* whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold in a slave sale. *You shall not rule over him with severity, but are to revere your God.*<sup>105</sup>

People and land alike are the servants of God, not of humankind, and are to be treated as such, with due respect, by the earthly viziers.<sup>106</sup> Proper treatment of God's property, both human and nonhuman, is equated with revering God Himself.<sup>107</sup>

Scholars of the Torah, the Jewish scriptural law, and the Talmud, Jewish scriptural commentaries and recorded oral rabbinical teachings, demonstrate how this principle of God's ownership of creation is a prominent element of the Jews' relationship to God.<sup>108</sup> Jonathan Helfand has observed:

[t]he fact that God is Creator endows all of creation with an intrinsic significance and importance. The Talmud observes: "Blessed be He created in His world, He created nothing in vain." Nothing in creation is useless or expendable; everything manifests some divine purpose. It follows, therefore, that there is a divine interest in maintaining the natural order of the universe.<sup>109</sup>

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is that the land, not Yahweh, had expelled the former inhabitants of Canaan because they had defiled the land through ungodly acts. Davies, *supra* note 75, at 30–31. Davies reads this as demonstrating that the land was holy before the Hebrews and the Torah arrived. *Id.* at 31. It is not religion that makes the land holy, it is the land's relationship to God as His creation. Thus, throughout the Old Testament, "obedience to the Law becomes the condition of occupying the land." *Id.*

<sup>105</sup> *Lev.* 25:39–43 (emphasis added).

<sup>106</sup> *See id.*

<sup>107</sup> Bratton states the point concisely: "What the Genesis passages and much of the rest of the Old Testament speak for is a servitude of man to God, and as a result, to God's interests." *Christian Ecotheology*, *supra* note 49, at 69.

<sup>108</sup> Stephenson Humphries-Brooks, *Talmud*, THE HOLMAN DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE 1320–21 (1991).

<sup>109</sup> Jonathan Helfand, *Judaism and Environmental Ethics*, in RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS 38, 42 (Eugene C. Hargrove ed., 1986) (quoting Shabbat, 77b).

For a Catholic view of Christian environmentalism based on the sacramental nature of all created beings, see Michael J. Himes & Kenneth R. Himes, *The Sacrament of Creation: Toward an Environmental Theology*, COMMONWEAL, Jan. 26, 1990, at 42, 45–46. "The discovery that

Eric Katz notes that Jewish law consistently recognizes all of nature, including humankind, as belonging solely to God, with man as a "temporary tenant" of God's fields.<sup>110</sup> A wonderful example of this is the Jewish law concerning blessings for food: "Man may not taste anything until he has recited a blessing, as it is written: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.' Anyone who derives benefit from this world without a (prior) blessing is guilty of misappropriating sacred property."<sup>111</sup> On the same point, Helfand recounts a telling Jewish interpretation of Deuteronomy 17:6, which is literally translated "let the dead one be killed":

The implied question, of course, is, How can a person be dead before he is executed? The Midrash Tanhuma explains: "An evil person is considered dead, for he sees the sun shining and does not bless 'the Creator of light' (from the morning prayer); he sees the sun setting and does not bless 'him who brings on the evening'" (from the evening prayer); he eats and drinks and offers no blessings.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, nature has a worthy place within God's order of creation that is independent of its usefulness or subservience to humankind. God created the nonhuman creation; it is humankind's duty to respect God's property.

b. *The Christian's Responsibility Extends Beyond Spiritual To Physical Aspects of Creation*

Throughout its early history, the Christian Church faced the growing popularity of sects within and independent of the Christian community that viewed the physical world as an inferior and evil corollary of the transcendent spiritual world.<sup>113</sup> The various branches of this "gnostic" movement,<sup>114</sup> which taught that matter was essentially evil,

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every creature, including oneself, is a sacrament of the love of God that causes all things to be provides the deepest foundation for reverencing creation."

John Cobb makes a similar argument when he states that Christians must care for nature because Christ, as "the Word," is the basis and method of all creation. John B. Cobb, Jr., *Ecology, Ethics, and Theology*, in *ECONOMICS, ECOLOGY, ETHICS: ESSAYS TOWARD A STEADY-STATE ECONOMY* 162, 175 (1980) (quoting *John* 1:1-4(a), 14(a)); see also JAMES NASH, *supra* note 41, at 108 (discussing "the incarnation as cosmic representation").

<sup>110</sup> Katz, *supra* note 49, at 58 (quoting Samuel Belkin, *Man as Temporary Tenant*, JUDAISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS 253 (Milton R. Konvitz ed., 1972)).

<sup>111</sup> Katz, *supra* note 49, at 59; see Helfand, *supra* note 109, at 40-41.

<sup>112</sup> Helfand, *supra* note 109, at 41 (quoting *Tanhuma*, *Berakha*, § 7).

<sup>113</sup> See SANTMIRE, *supra* note 37, at 33.

<sup>114</sup> The history and theology of the gnostics, and the question of whether the movement arose

prompted written condemnations from Paul, John, and several second-century Christian writers.<sup>115</sup> Although Gnosticism faded in importance after the third century, the movement's influence is evident in theological systems that emphasize the incompatibility of humankind's status as a part of nature under the control of God and humankind's spiritual aspirations.<sup>116</sup>

Commentators who blame environmental degradation on the biblical creation story by arguing that the story prompts humankind to separate itself from nonhuman creation and exploitatively to domi-

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within Christianity or parallel to the new church, have gained much attention since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945 and the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls in 1946. Harold S. Songer, *Gnosticism*, in *THE HOLMAN BIBLE DICTIONARY* 558, 559 (1991). These ancient texts are believed to include original compositions of the gnostic community. For detailed discussions see generally HANS JONAS, *THE Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (2d ed. 1963); ELAINE H. PAGELS, *THE Gnostic Gospels* (1979).

While gnostic doctrine varied greatly from one community or individual teacher to another, the basic elements of gnostic thought included the belief that members of the cult were privy to secret sources of spiritual knowledge necessary for the realization of a divine spark within the human spirit. Elaine H. Pagels, *Gnosticism*, in *THE INTERPRETER'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE* (supp. vol.) 364, 364-65 (1976) [hereinafter Pagels, IDB]; Songer, *supra*, at 558. The Gnostics taught that a person's spirit, as a part of God, was "unalterably divine," and longed to transcend the physical realm and return to God to be reabsorbed into the deity. However, as Pagels explains, the divine spirit had mingled with: "two distinct lower elements . . . first, with the body, dominated by sensual passions: second, with the soul, the center of psychic functions. The spirit, hidden within soul and body like marrow within two layers of bone and flesh (*Excerpts from Theodotus* 51-61), has been entrapped within these lower elements." Pagels, IDB, *supra*, at 366.

The Gnostics rejected the Old Testament and the Creator God of the Old Testament, Yahweh, because Yahweh dealt in physical rather than spiritual realities. *Id.* at 366-67. "Matter was seen as inferior, sin-causing, and always deteriorating; thought or knowledge distinguished persons from matter and animals and was imperishable, capable of revealing god, and the only channel of redemption." Songer, *supra*, at 558.

<sup>115</sup> Paul's epistle to the Colossians and I John are considered rebuttals to gnostic teachings. SANTMIRE, *supra* note 37, at 33. Ireneaus, an early Christian writer and ardent defender of the church against gnostic theology, reported that "John wrote his Gospel . . . to refute the views of Cerinthus, an early Gnostic. Over against the gnostic assertion that the true God would not enter our world, John stressed in his Gospel that Jesus was God's incarnate Son." Songer, *supra* note 114, at 558. Augustine and Francis, and later Luther and Calvin, each were aligned with Ireneaus in discerning a direct correlation between the physical creation, the Christian and God, contrary to the gnostic incompatibility of the spiritual and the physical. "For them, the center of theological reflection must focus on the descent of God to his creation," rather than on the gnostic thought of man (or some part of him) escaping an evil physical world to ascend to God. SANTMIRE, *supra* note 37, at 179. Augustine, far from seeing the body as an evil trap for the divine spark, uses "the image of the body as the 'spouse' of the soul. . . . [H]e thinks of the body as having a kind of passion for the soul, and the separation of the two therefore, as being unnatural." *Id.* at 67-68 (citing MARGARET R. MILES, *AUGUSTINE ON THE BODY* 38 (1979)).

<sup>116</sup> See SANTMIRE, *supra* note 37, at 67-68.

nate the earth superimpose onto Christianity a gnostic philosophy the Christian Church fought and defeated during the time of Ireneaus and Augustine. In counterpoint, Christians who adopt a theology that elevates their responsibilities to a New Testament "spiritual" God, as distinct from those owed the Creator God of the Old Testament *and His creation*, are adopting the ancient gnostic heresy. Gnosticism erroneously taught that spiritual man is good while the body and nature are somehow debased or evil.<sup>117</sup> A Christian philosophy that discounts responsibility toward God's physical creation is merely a new manifestation of the old gnostic heresy.

The powerful German-American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr presents a straightforward modern repudiation of the gnostic duality of mind and body.<sup>118</sup> To Niebuhr, this dualism stems from the classical concept of man, which is in stark contrast to the hebraic/biblical concept of man.<sup>119</sup> Niebuhr states: "[t]his body-mind dualism and the value judgments passed upon both body and mind stand in sharpest contrast to the Biblical view of man and achieve a fateful influence in all subsequent theories of human nature. *The Bible knows nothing of a good mind and an evil body.*"<sup>120</sup> To the gnostics, an evil body merely represented part of the evil physical creation, because all matter was inherently debased.<sup>121</sup> Niebuhr also explains how modern Protestant Christianity differs fundamentally from gnostic dualism:

In Christianity it is not the eternal man who judges the finite man; but the eternal and holy God who judges sinful man. Nor is redemption in the power of the eternal man who gradually sloughs off finite man. Man is not divided against himself so that the essential man can be extricated from the nonessential.<sup>122</sup>

It is not finite man's responsibility toward eternal man that the Christian must contemplate regarding the use of the environment, but humankind's responsibility toward God. Nor can God be divided in this way. The separation of the Creator/Old Testament God from the

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<sup>117</sup> See CHRISTIANITY, WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE, *supra* note 47, at 17, 19–23.

<sup>118</sup> NIEBUHR, *supra* note 90, at 7.

<sup>119</sup> *Id.* On this topic Songer agrees that gnosticism is at its root "the 'radical Hellenizing of Christianity.'" Songer, *supra* note 114, at 559. Songer credits the strength of gnosticism as a threat to the early Christian Church to the movement's pre-Christian roots, "not [as] an organized religion but [as a] general attitude among thoughtful persons that although ignorance abounded, one could through knowledge come to understand one's true identity and find union or relationship with the absolute deity." *Id.*

<sup>120</sup> NIEBUHR, *supra* note 90, at 7 (emphasis added).

<sup>121</sup> See Pagels, IDB, *supra* note 114, at 366.

<sup>122</sup> *Id.* at 16.

Father/New Testament God divorces one part of the essence of God from another. Just as the Creator God is intimately involved in the eventual redemption of humanity,<sup>123</sup> so do the redemptive actions of God and Christ work in all creation. As Old Testament scholar Claus Westermann explains:

[o]nly he who is active in everything could be the savior. Since God is One, the savior must also be the creator. It follows that in the Old Testament the history established by God's saving deed was expanded to include the beginning of everything that happens. The savior of Israel is the creator; the creator is the savior of Israel. What began in creation issues into Israel's history.<sup>124</sup>

The activity of God in creation extended even to the sacrifice of the incarnation, where God became flesh in the ultimate testimony against gnostic dualism.<sup>125</sup> If God thus cares for His creation, so should all who aspire to follow Him.

### C. *The Birds Of the Air*

Although Passmore argued that some elements of Western religious tradition could become the seeds of an environmentally responsible ethic, Passmore also believed that in developing a philosophical foundation for intergenerational environmental responsibility, he had to counter the effect of Jesus's statement in Matthew 6:34: "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."<sup>126</sup> Passmore incorrectly assumed that Jesus's statement directs Christians to disregard the environmental impact of their actions because "it would not matter whether the scientists are right or wrong in predicting an early exhaustion of resources. For the future would be none of our business."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> See Gen. 3:15. Here, in what appears to be the earliest prophecy of redemption, God tells the serpent of Eden: "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." *Id.* Davies explains:

[u]ltimately of course *he* was understood to refer to the Messiah and so applied to Jesus Christ. . . . Thus in Christian interpretation the Christological bruising of the serpent's head came to be regarded as the first promise recorded in the Bible, and was given the technical title the *Protevangelium*, literally, the first gospel.

Davies, *supra* note 75, at 141.

<sup>124</sup> CLAUS WESTERMANN, *ELEMENTS OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY* 86 (1982).

<sup>125</sup> See *supra* note 109 (discussing Cobb).

<sup>126</sup> Matt. 6:34.

<sup>127</sup> PASSMORE, *supra* note 61, at 79.

The context of the passage demonstrates that Jesus was concerned, instead, that his disciples learn (i) to depend on God for their physical needs and (ii) to avoid fashioning their lives as a quest for material gain. There is no textual indication that Jesus was championing indifference to nature.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, the two metaphors used by Jesus in the same passage to teach of God's concern for humanity depend for their effect on the importance of nature:

Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? . . . Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?<sup>129</sup>

The passage highlights three tenets of environmental theocentricity. First, Jesus, echoing the creation story, affirms that nature is God's, and that God is concerned about all of His creation. Second, at least some aspects of nature reveal the attributes of God.<sup>130</sup> Third, God

<sup>128</sup> See *Matt.* 6:26–34.

<sup>129</sup> *Id.* 6:26–30.

<sup>130</sup> This is the doctrine of "natural revelation." The most direct biblical authority for this doctrine is *Romans* 1:18–20, where Paul teaches that all people, Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and barbarians, have an opportunity to perceive God in their surroundings:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

*Rom.* 1:18–20 (emphasis added).

Augustine was convinced of the value of the physical world in instructing humankind of God's attributes. See SANTMIRE, *supra* note 37, at 66–67. He sought to explain God in terms of nature very similar to those used by God in the final chapters of *Job* to describe Himself and His authority over creation:

Ask the loveliness of the earth, ask the loveliness of the sea, ask the loveliness of the wide airy spaces, ask the loveliness of the sky, ask the order of the stars, ask the sun . . . ask the souls that are hidden, the bodies that are perceptive; the visible things which must be governed, the invisible things that govern—ask these things, and they will all answer you, Yes, see we are lovely. Their loveliness is their confession. And all these lovely but mutable things, who has made them, but Beauty immutable.

AUGUSTINE, *SERMONS*, 241.2 (quoted by SANTMIRE, *supra* note 37, at 66–67).

A modern scholar, Elton Trueblood, explains natural revelation in these words:

If it is really true that, in addition to all finite spirits, there is an infinite Spirit, the divine Mind, who is not only the Companion of our spirits but the Creator and Sustainer of the world order; it is reasonable to expect to find evidences of the divine Mind

has established a hierarchy within the realm of His creation. The passage implies that neither the birds nor the lilies, regardless of their beauty, are as important as humans, who are capable of having a rational relationship with the Creator. But at the same time, through example and action, God commands respect for all of His creation. He teaches that human and nonhuman nature are equals in their ultimate task: the service of the Creator.

The same theme is developed in Luke 12:6-7: "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows."<sup>131</sup> Again, the three principles of theocentricity are present: the value of nature, shown through God's constant care—He does not *forget* the sparrows—and knowledge of its disposition; the hierarchy of value, which allows nature to be used by humankind in proper service to God; and the ultimate task of all creation to serve God. In this case the sparrows were being sold for use as a temple sacrifice, an idea that will occur to the biocentrist as the epitome of Christianity's misuse of nature. The adherent of the Bible cannot deny that nature was created by God for use by man in the service of God. But neither can one deny that God is in control of nature, constantly cares for nature, knows of its use, and does not forget any element of His creation. The crucial corollary to these principles is the principle that God holds humankind accountable for its use of nature.

A review of the Scriptures used by Leopold, White, and Passmore in placing the blame for ecological degradation on biblical sources shows, to the contrary, that the Bible places Christians under a mandate to care for the physical creation. Although the writers may have been correct to blame the Christian Church in the West or individual Christians for ignoring environmental degradation, the writers were incorrect to conclude that the Bible condoned or encouraged such

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in the process which goes on relatively independent of the will of men. Specifically, we should expect to find various aspects of the natural order which are not understandable except by reference to the hypothesis in question. If God really is, we should expect the heavens to declare His glory and the firmament to show His handiwork.

D. ELTON TRUEBLOOD, *PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION* 94 (1957). On the same subject, Balfour taught that humans observing beauty in nature do not seek to know the cause of the beauty, as one might for a scientific phenomenon, but rather "long to regard beauty as a revelation—a revelation from spirit to spirit, not from one kind of atomic agitation to the 'psychic' accompaniment of another. On this condition only can its highest values be maintained." ARTHUR J. BALFOUR, *THEISM AND HUMANISM* 90 (1915) (footnote omitted).

<sup>131</sup> *Luke* 12:6-7.

ignorance, and they failed to tap the powerful aspects of the Judeo-Christian tradition that demand responsible environmentalism.

#### IV. BEYOND ENVIRONMENTALISM: THE TEXT OF CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

Many other biblical texts and stories, including Old and New Testament sources, direct Christians toward their responsibility to use wisely the natural resources God has given them.

##### A. *Noah and the Covenant with All Flesh*

The story of Noah and the Ark has obvious ramifications that cut both for and against the ardent environmentalist.<sup>132</sup> The biocentrist is dismayed by God's decision to destroy most of the biotic life on earth in order to undo humankind's corruption.<sup>133</sup> Even the anthropocentrist is dismayed at God's decision to destroy most of humankind. But in the midst of cataclysm, God preserved a remnant of His biotic creation to start again, and hopefully to avoid the degree of degradation that had occurred in the generations following Adam.<sup>134</sup> The counterbalancing measures of destruction and preservation mirror tenants of theocentric environmentalism: all creation, including humankind, is God's and ultimately will be used as God decides; meanwhile, God cares for His creation deeply enough to provide for continuance. The biblical writer is careful to note that no creature is insignificant in God's decision to preserve a remnant.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *Gen.* 6-9.

<sup>133</sup> Humankind's corruption caused the flood:

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

*Id.* 6:5-7.

<sup>134</sup> God based His decision to preserve a remnant of His biotic creation on the existence of a righteous man: "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." *Id.* 6:8. LaBar notes: "[o]ne reason for preserving [the animals] must have been their life-support value for man; nevertheless, as Genesis 8:1 suggests, God was concerned not only for Noah, but also for the animals, for 'every living thing.'" LaBar, *supra* note 49, at 82.

<sup>135</sup> When the flood occurred:

[t]hey and every beast after its kind [entered the Ark], and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds. So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.

As with the creation story, the conclusion of the story of Noah is critical in characterizing God's relationship toward nature. In Genesis 9, God makes his first formal covenant with humankind by promising that He never again will destroy the world by flood. Note that the covenant is not with humankind alone:

Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.<sup>136</sup>

Noah's story demonstrates the evolution of humankind's relationship with God. The relationship progresses from the destruction of "all flesh,"<sup>137</sup> in order to end humankind's evil, to the salvation of a remnant, even though evil is sure to rise again.<sup>138</sup> God and humankind move from a corporate relationship, of humankind to God, to a personal relationship, of Noah to God. Now the rainbow will become the symbol of God's promise to all humankind and to all flesh, but the responsibility of maintaining a relationship to God will become individual. The result, as Jesus teaches generations later, is that although God allows His rain to fall on the just and the unjust, in the final judgment God will not condemn humankind nation by nation or city by city.<sup>139</sup> Instead, the tares will be allowed to grow with the wheat until harvest, when the tares will be separated and burned.<sup>140</sup> Noah's

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*Gen.* 7:14–15. The Bible gives a characteristically simple answer to the question of how Noah got all those wild animals on the boat: "So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him, and the Lord closed it behind him." *Id.* 7:15–16 (emphasis added). This passage demonstrates the relationship that God bears to natural objects and the responsiveness of nature to God: The animals responded to God's command, and the animals are deemed to have the "breath of life," a "capacity for life" given directly and only from God. See *Breath of Life*, THE HOLMAN BIBLE DICTIONARY 210 (1991).

<sup>136</sup> *Gen.* 9:9–10.

<sup>137</sup> *Id.* 6:13.

<sup>138</sup> *Id.* 9:9–10.

<sup>139</sup> This theme develops quickly after the story of Noah in the history of Abraham's relationship with God. God demonstrates His unwillingness to "sweep away the righteous with the wicked," *Id.* 18:23, during His negotiating session with Abraham concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham was concerned because his nephew, Lot, lived in Sodom. When Abraham dared consecutively to inquire of God whether He would destroy Sodom if 50, 45, 40, 30, 20 or, finally, only 10 righteous people could be found there, God declared: "I will not destroy it on account of the ten." *Gen.* 18:32. Lot and his family, however, were the only inhabitants found worthy of mercy. Even Lot's wife later succumbed to a love of the city and died with its other inhabitants. *Id.* 19:26.

<sup>140</sup> See *Matt.* 13:24–30, 36–40 (KJV).

story begins a more individual responsibility for each person's relationship to God, a responsibility that includes care for God's creation. Like the creation story, the story of Noah is not about environmentalism; nevertheless it informs the Christian's understanding of God's relationship with human and nonhuman creation.<sup>141</sup>

*B. Joseph: Common Sense Environmentalism Through  
Command-and-Control Regulation*

Told in terms of environmental jargon, Genesis 41 tells the story of an administrator implementing a severe scheme of command-and-control regulation in order to avoid an irretrievable commitment of scarce natural resources that otherwise would result in environmental degradation and, ultimately, widespread famine.<sup>142</sup> In biblical terms, the chapter tells the story of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers, but who became Pharaoh's second-in-command in Egypt.<sup>143</sup> The story is an example of how God can use a human regulatory scheme to accomplish environmental stewardship.

Through seven years of the most productive harvest Egypt had seen, Joseph appeared as a doomsayer, reminding the Egyptians of the seven years of famine to come.<sup>144</sup> Under the authority of Pharaoh, he instituted a program through which Pharaoh required every Egyptian farmer to place one-fifth of all produce harvested during the seven abundant years into common storage silos located throughout

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<sup>141</sup> The story concludes in two ways that have troubled environmental ethicists deeply; the reestablishment of humankind's dominion over nonhuman creation, *Gen.* 9:1-2, and the instruction, for the first time, that animals are meant to be a source of food for humans, *Gen.* 9:3. Compare this to the vegetarian ideal which is at least implicit in *Gen.* 1:29-30, although reading vegetarianism into that passage conflicts with *Gen.* 1:28.

<sup>142</sup> See *Gen.* 41.

<sup>143</sup> When Joseph was young, his father's preferential treatment made him the subject of the intense jealousy of his older brothers. *Id.* at 37:4. Joseph did not help matters by interpreting his own dreams as prophesies that his older brothers would one day serve him. *Id.* at 37:5-10. In response, Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave to a passing caravan bound for Egypt. *Id.* at 37:25-28. Joseph's ability to interpret dreams, coupled with political and administrative acumen, eventually led him into the service of Pharaoh. *Id.* at 40:4-41:42.

Pharaoh asked Joseph to interpret two dreams that his seers had been unable to decipher. *Gen.* 41:1-8. Joseph interpreted the dreams to mean that Egypt would experience seven years of plentiful harvest followed by seven years of lethal drought. *Id.* 41:26-31. Joseph astutely suggested: "[n]ow let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt." *Id.* 41:33. Pharaoh responded: "[s]ince God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are." *Id.* 41:39. Pharaoh then placed Joseph in command of all Egypt. *Id.* 41:41-44.

<sup>144</sup> See *Gen.* 41.

the country.<sup>145</sup> Joseph gathered the food until “he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.”<sup>146</sup> One can imagine the grumbling of the people who, in their most abundant years, saw good wheat sitting unused in silos guarded by the Pharaoh’s troops.<sup>147</sup>

But then the seven years of abundance ended, the famine began, and “the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread.”<sup>148</sup> The famine that followed extended beyond Egypt, so that even Joseph’s family in Canaan had no food.<sup>149</sup> But due to Joseph’s plan and enforcement, “in all the land of Egypt there was bread.”<sup>150</sup> In the later years of the famine, when Joseph foresaw the increasing ability of the land to produce once more, Joseph instituted a second, more extreme round of agricultural regulation.<sup>151</sup> After the people of Egypt spent all they had on food, Joseph accepted their livestock in exchange for food.<sup>152</sup> The next year Joseph bought all of the farm land in Egypt in exchange for food and moved all of the people into the cities where Joseph had stored food.<sup>153</sup> Joseph then ostensibly gave the land back to the farmers, giving them seed and allowing them to farm the land for a tax of one-fifth of the produce, payable annually to the Pharaoh.<sup>154</sup>

The story of Joseph demonstrates that regulatory structure can be used wisely within God’s omnipotence. Joseph’s regulatory system, directed by God, took a common-sense approach to a lethal problem and saved Egypt from the starvation that surrounded it. But one can only imagine the number of Egyptians who thought Joseph a fool for enforcing strict conservation regulations during the Egyptian time of plenty. The modern parallels for clean air, clean water, and wetlands are obvious.

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<sup>145</sup> *Id.* 41:34–37, 47–49 (KJV).

<sup>146</sup> *Id.* 41:49.

<sup>147</sup> *Id.* 41:35–36. Joseph’s regulatory powers were extreme. Without his permission, no one could “raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” *Id.* 41:44.

<sup>148</sup> *Id.* 41:55.

<sup>149</sup> *Gen.* 42–47.

<sup>150</sup> *Id.* 41:54; 42:1–2. Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt to buy bread. *Id.* at 42:3. Although the brothers did not immediately recognize the administrator of Egypt as Joseph, Joseph treated the brothers justly and eventually the brothers reconciled. *Id.* 42:6–45:15. Jacob’s entire family moved to Egypt under Joseph’s protection. *See id.* 42–47. After the death of Joseph and Pharaoh, a new Pharaoh reigned in Egypt “who did not know Joseph.” *Ex.* 1:8. The new Pharaoh enslaved the Hebrews, setting the stage for the leadership of Moses 400 years later. *Id.* at 1:11–14.

<sup>151</sup> *Gen.* 47:13–26.

<sup>152</sup> *Id.*

<sup>153</sup> *Id.*

<sup>154</sup> *Id.* 47:33–26.

### C. *Christ and Nature*

The teachings of Jesus demonstrate that nature is responsive not only to the physical power, but also to the moral authority of God; and that nature fills a participatory function in the redemptive actions of God. Nature's response to God is more than the mere subjugation of physics, that of a rock being thrown by a person. Biblical writers emphasized in many situations that nature resonates with the purposes of God's interaction with humankind. The responsiveness of nature to the moral authority of God shows God in nature like an artist is shown in her art or a gardener in his garden.<sup>155</sup> To use a biblical example, the responsiveness is like that of sheep to the voice of their shepherd.<sup>156</sup>

#### 1. Old Testament Foundations

Christ's attitude toward nature was built on the foundation of His immersion in the images and messages of the Old Testament. The responsiveness of nature to God is displayed in the Bible both poetically and literally. The Old Testament tells of trees and mountains that will sing and "clap their hands" when God accomplishes His redemptive purpose.<sup>157</sup> Isaiah 55:12 states:

For you will go out with joy,  
And be led forth with peace;  
The mountains and the hills  
will break forth into shouts  
of joy before you,  
And all the trees of the field  
will clap their hands.

Within the context provided by chapter 55, this passage speaks poetically rather than literally. In the entire chapter Isaiah contrasts the present life on earth to life as it will be after humankind's redemption. Verse 2 states:

Why do you spend money for  
what is not bread,

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<sup>155</sup> Bratton states: "[t]he psalms further inform us that wild nature praises and glorifies God. This is because of its origin in God's word and has nothing to do with human presence or use. This characteristic of nature is within human perception and should inspire humankind to a similar response." CHRISTIANITY, WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE, *supra* note 47, at 302.

<sup>156</sup> *John* 10:1-5.

<sup>157</sup> *Isa.* 55:12 (KJV).

And your wages for what does  
 not satisfy?  
 Listen carefully to Me, and eat  
 what is good,  
 And delight yourself in abundance.

Isaiah is not referring to physical bread, anymore than Jesus refers to physical water in his discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well (“[W]hoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” John 4:14). Similarly, while the fact of nature’s responsiveness shown in verse 12 is literal, Isaiah’s expression is figurative and poetic.<sup>158</sup> Isaiah saw the trees as participants in God’s relationship with His creation.<sup>159</sup> As their branches moved with the breeze, which long has been associated with the breath of God, even the trees would feel God’s presence and redemptive power.<sup>160</sup>

Continuing the imagery, Isaiah’s next verse describes the state of redemption by echoing the “pre-weed” paradise of Eden:

Instead of the thorn bush the  
 cypress will come up;  
 And instead of the nettle the  
 myrtle will come up;  
 And it will be a memorial to  
 the Lord,  
 For an everlasting sign which  
 will not be cut off.<sup>161</sup>

The Psalms also emphasize God’s care for His own creation and the power that God has utilized in His initial and continuing acts of creation.<sup>162</sup> Both the Mosaic law and the prophetic writings describe the

<sup>158</sup> See *id.* 55:12.

<sup>159</sup> *Id.*

<sup>160</sup> See Donald R. Potts, *Breath*, THE HOLMAN BIBLE DICTIONARY 210 (1991).

<sup>161</sup> *Isa.* 55:13; see *Gen.* 3:18 (after the fall, the earth grows “thorns and thistles”). See also *I Chron.* 16:33 (“Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the Lord”); *Ps.* 96:12–13(a) (“Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy/ Before the Lord, For He is coming”).

<sup>162</sup> See *Ps.* 104:5–9. Psalm 104 often is cited as an example:

He established the earth upon  
 its foundations, . . .  
 Thou didst cover it with the  
 deep as with a garment;  
 The waters were standing  
 above the mountains.  
 At thy rebuke they fled;  
 At the sound of Thy thunder  
 they hurried away.

land of Israel, set aside by God for his chosen people, as an agent of God who takes part in judging and rebuking the people when they break their covenant with God.<sup>163</sup> Davies cites Leviticus 20:22–26, where God tells the Israelites to obey His commandments so that the chosen land will not “spew you out.”<sup>164</sup> Also in Leviticus 18:24–30 it is the land, not Yahweh, that is said to have expelled its former inhabitants because they had defiled the land through ungodly acts.<sup>165</sup>

## 2. Teachings of Jesus

Jesus seldom taught explicitly about nature, but He used nature and nature’s responsiveness and participation with God as crucial elements in at least three startling New Testament scenes.<sup>166</sup> Jesus relies on the Old Testament view of a creation that is interactive with God. Jesus’s words show that the Old Testament’s emphasis on nature is not merely a remnant of ancient pantheism or nature-God worship.<sup>167</sup>

During Jesus’s final entry into Jerusalem a “multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen . . . some of the Pharisees in the multitude said

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The mountains rose; the valleys  
sunk down  
To the place which Thou didst  
establish for them.  
Thou didst set a boundary that  
they may not pass over;  
that they may not return to  
cover the earth.

*Ps.* 104:5–9. Santmire notes that the obverse of the theme stated in *Ps.* 104

is one of the least understood themes in the Old Testament: nature’s praise of Yahweh. The fullest expression of it is Psalm 148, which calls the whole creation—sun and moon, sea monsters and all depths, mountains and all hills, as well as kings of the earth and all peoples—to praise Yahweh.

SANTMIRE, *supra* note 37, at 198–99. Santmire states that behind these verses is a “coherent theological assumption: that the glories of nature are enjoyable and pleasing to Yahweh, just as the right kind of sacrifice is sometimes said to be pleasing to him.” *Id.*; see also *Ps.* 29:3 (“The God of glory thunders”) (discussed in SANTMIRE, *supra* note 37, at 194–95).

<sup>163</sup> *Lev.* 20:22–26.

<sup>164</sup> DAVIES, *supra* note 75, at 30–31.

<sup>165</sup> *Id.* To Davies, the land was holy before the Hebrews arrived, and before the Torah arrived. *Id.* at 31. It is not religion that makes the land holy, but the land’s part in God’s purposes. Thus, throughout the Old Testament “obedience to the Law becomes the condition of occupying the land.” *Id.*

<sup>166</sup> See discussion of God’s care for the sparrows and the lilies, *supra* notes 130–35 and accompanying text.

<sup>167</sup> See, e.g., *Luke* 19:37, 39–40.

to [Jesus], "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." And He answered and said, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"<sup>168</sup> Here again is an example of nature residing closer to God than does human-kind. Even the most basic forms of inanimate nature—the stones—participate in the glory of God, in the work of Christ, and in the redemption of the world, and they are closer to God's Kingdom than the religious leaders of the day.<sup>169</sup> As in the legend of The Gentle Beasts, where the animals surrounding the infant Jesus's manger instinctively give the infant Jesus whatever they have to offer, it is "natural" for the creatures and objects of God's creation to welcome a force of moral goodness.<sup>170</sup> The sheep acknowledge the Shepherd instinctively.<sup>171</sup>

#### V. BEYOND ENVIRONMENTALISTS: MODELS OF CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

When Christopher Stone suggested that natural objects be granted standing to litigate issues related to their own preservation, he found himself in the uncomfortable position of discussing how such a legal system would benefit humanity.<sup>172</sup> Stone remarked that the question

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<sup>168</sup> *Id.* A similar event occurs in the Old Testament when Joshua leads the Israelites to make a covenant to serve God:

And Joshua wrote these words in the book on the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, lest you deny your God.

*Josh.* 24:26-27.

<sup>169</sup> *Luke* 19:37, 39-40.

<sup>170</sup> See generally TOMIE DE PAOLA, ILLUS. THE GENTLE BEASTS: AN OLD ENGLISH CHRISTMAS CAROL (1981).

<sup>171</sup> Paul continues this theme in the eighth chapter of Romans where, although he is contrasting the Christian's spiritual life with the "mind set on the flesh," *Rom.* 8:5, he includes the physical creation of God not as a part of the nonspiritual world that is hostile to God, but as an entity longing for redemption:

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

*Rom.* 8:19-22. As in the passage from Luke, the important distinction is not between human and nonhuman creation, but between that part of creation that seeks God and that part that attempts to avoid God. Nature as a whole is identified with the Christian, who is seeking to know God and is contrasted with the human mind that is hostile to God. *Id.*

<sup>172</sup> Christopher D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?—Toward Legal Rights For Natural Objects*, 45 S. CAL. L. REV. 450, 490-91 (1972).

"ask[ed] for me to justify my position in the very anthropocentric hedonist terms that I am proposing we modify."<sup>173</sup> Stone exposed a paradox of philosophical argument: most, if not all, arguments that move people to action, even biocentric arguments, include an elemental appeal to self-preservation or self-aggrandizement.<sup>174</sup> As an example, he uses Socrates who argued against hedonism by stating that immorality results in personal unhappiness.<sup>175</sup>

Christians should admit that there are two levels on which we obey God. The first level, like Stone's self-preservation theory, is that at which we obey God in order to earn His affirmation and our own eternal life. At its most shallow, this is the "fire insurance" Christianity that only seeks to avoid divine punishment.

But there is a deeper level of Christian duty and obedience at which we serve God simply because that action favors good over evil, right over wrong, selflessness over egocentricity, and truth over falsehood. Environmentalism stemming from the first level of obedience may have beneficial results for the environment, but the question that nagged Stone continues to nag us—"what's in it for the humans."<sup>176</sup> The presence of that question always will limit the Christian's dedication to care for God's creation, just as in that shallower form of Christianity it limits the dedication of the follower to Christ.

The deeper level of Christianity results in the stronger commitment to God and to His creation and avoids Stone's paradox. This level of Christian commitment to ideal and duty and its result in a Christian's life is exemplified by two models, one ancient and one modern: Job and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

### A. *Job*

Job provides the strongest biblical example of obedience grounded in duty rather than self-preservation.<sup>177</sup> After suffering the destruc-

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<sup>173</sup> *Id.* at 490.

<sup>174</sup> Stone states:

perhaps the truth is that in any argument which aims at persuading a human being to action (on ethical or any other bases), "logic" is only an instrument for illuminating positions, at best, and in the last analysis it is psycho-logical appeals to the listener's self-interest that hold sway, however "principled" the rhetoric may be.

*Id.* at 491-92.

<sup>175</sup> *Id.* at 491.

<sup>176</sup> *Id.*

<sup>177</sup> I suggest Job as the model in this context rather than Jesus because, in the separation from God inherent with the experience of the cross, a spiritual element that humans cannot

tion of his fortune, the death of his children, the degradation of his health, and the betrayal of his wife, Job is stripped of all external reasons to obey God.<sup>178</sup> He stands eye to eye with God, the two alone in the universe, and must decide in his pain whether to submit to God or to curse God and die, as his wife suggested.<sup>179</sup> The unique part of his story is that from Job's perspective, he has nothing to lose by cursing God *except his relationship with God*, a relationship that had brought him great pain. His decisional process is not impaired by Stone's question of self-preservation, for Job has no reason to think that God will stop the process that is now leading to his death:

Man, who is born of woman,  
Is short-lived and full of turmoil.  
Like a flower he comes forth  
and withers.  
He also flees like a shadow and  
does not return.

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For there is hope for a tree,  
When it is cut down, that it will  
sprout again,  
And its shoots will not fail.

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But man dies and lies prostrate.  
Man expires, and where is he?<sup>180</sup>

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comprehend, Christ understood more of the process and purpose of His suffering than did Job. It is Job's complete lack of hope near the end of his story, a condition Jesus avoided through His knowledge of the Father, that reveals Job's devotion to God founded on duty. Jesus knew of Heaven; Job knew only of Sheol. *See infra* note 179.

<sup>178</sup> Before Job suffered, Satan told God that Job was righteous only because God had "made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side[.] Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land." *Job* 1:10 (KJV). Satan challenged God that if the hedge was removed, and Job allowed to suffer serious losses, Job would "surely curse Thee to Thy face." *Id.* at 1:11.

<sup>179</sup> *Id.* 2:9. Dietrich Bonhoeffer uses similar language to describe Jesus's presentation of the challenge of discipleship to the rich young ruler: "He stands face to face with Jesus, the Son of God: it is the ultimate encounter. It is now a question of yes or no, of obedience or disobedience." DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, *THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP* 67 (R.H. Fuller trans., 1948) (1937) [hereinafter *COST OF DISCIPLESHIP*]; *see Mark* 10:17-31.

<sup>180</sup> *Mark* 14:1-2, 7, 10. Only tentatively does Job ask the hopeful question:

[i]f a man dies, will he live again?  
All the days of my struggle I  
will wait,  
Until my change comes.

*Id.* 14:14.

When God responds to Job, He does so by expressing His power, not by creating a moral explanation for His actions that would give Job the option of obeying God in order to fulfill the rational purpose of God's plan (obedience for the purpose of self-aggrandizement).<sup>181</sup> Rather, God asks Job if he could perform the acts of creation that God performed: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth! Tell me, if you have understanding."<sup>182</sup> Finally, God uses nature and creation to demonstrate Job's duty to obey Him simply because He is God:

Have you entered the storehouses of the snow,  
 Or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,  
 Which I have reserved for the  
     time of distress,  
 For the day of war and battle?

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Can you bind the chains of the  
     Pleiades,  
 Or loose the cords of Orion?  
 Can you lead forth a constellation in its season,  
 And guide the Bear with her  
     satellites?

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Is it by your understanding that  
     the hawk soars,  
 Stretching his wings toward  
     the south?  
 Is it at your command that the  
     eagle mounts up,  
 And makes his nest on high?<sup>183</sup>

Job's response at this pivotal point is to worship God rather than to despise or curse Him.<sup>184</sup> Only as an afterthought is Job rewarded for

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<sup>181</sup> Bratton comments on Job 38-41 as follows:

Using a series of natural examples, God articulates the extent of divine rights. The primary thrust of the original text was to deal with suffering among the righteous and the unexplainable elements in God's interactions with humankind. For our purposes, we should note Yahweh's speech declares that the Creator is continually active in natural processes and that humankind will never be God's match.

CHRISTIANITY, WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE, *supra* note 47, at 85.

<sup>182</sup> Job 38:4.

<sup>183</sup> *Id.* 38:22-23, 31-32; 39:26-27.

<sup>184</sup> *Id.* 40:3-5; 42:1-6.

his obedience;<sup>185</sup> God makes no promise of reward for obedience and makes no prior indication that blessings will follow from service.<sup>186</sup>

If Christians view their responsibility to the environment through the lessons taught in Job, the depth of our duty becomes apparent. As in the creation story, *nonhuman creation more closely is identified with God than is sinful man*, and humankind's relationship with creation becomes a gauge of its relationship to God.<sup>187</sup> As James Nash

<sup>185</sup> *Id.* 42:10–17.

<sup>186</sup> See *supra* notes 177–85.

<sup>187</sup> According to Katz, God's use of natural objects and animals to answer Job's questions is the strongest biblical example of the Jewish doctrine of *bal tashcit*, which is translated literally "do not destroy." Katz, *supra* note 49, at 62–63. The principle is first mentioned in the Hebrew rules of war, *Deut.* 20:19–20, where warriors are forbidden to destroy the trees around a besieged city. Trees that are of no use for food may be used for building siegeworks, but food-bearing trees were to be left standing, despite the fact that the enemy may be able to use these trees for sustenance at some future point. A scorched earth policy, as used by the Assyrians of the time, was forbidden unless specifically directed by God. *Id.* at 62–63. Jewish scholars note that this is a general principle against needless destruction of nature that extends beyond the battlefield, and is "so powerful that it cannot even be overridden for the sake of victory in war." *Id.* at 63 (citing Robert Gordin, *Judaism and the Environment*, CONGRESS MONTHLY, Sept.—Oct. 1990, at 9; Norman Lamm, *Ecology and Jewish Law and Technology*, FAITH AND DOUBT 164–65 (1971), reprinted in JUDAISM AND ECOLOGY, 1970–1986: A SOURCEBOOK OF READINGS 79 (Marc Swetlitz ed., 1990)). Gordin states: "[t]he principle of *bal tashcit* entered deep into Jewish consciousness, so that the aversion to vandalism became an almost psychological reflex and wanton destruction was viewed with loathing and horror by Jews for centuries." Katz, *supra* note 49, at 63–64 (quoting Gordin, *supra* at 9). No exception exists for "wise use" of private, as opposed to communal or public, property that would amount to reckless destruction. "[O]ne is not permitted to destroy one's own property any more than he is permitted to destroy another's." *Id.* at 64.

The connection to the book of Job begins with Katz's conclusion that *bal tashcit* is an element of obedience to God, through respect for God's creation, that is founded on duty rather than the hope for profit or happiness:

The principle is not designed to make life better for humanity; it is not meant to insure [sic] a healthy and productive environment for human beings. In the terminology of environmental philosophy, it is not an *anthropocentric* principle at all: its purpose is not to guarantee or promote human interests. The purpose of *bal tashcit* is to maintain respect for God's creation.

*Id.* at 65 (emphasis in original).

Katz concludes:

Job, as well as any other human being, errs when he believes that the events of the world must have a rational explanation relevant to human life. The events of the world are ultimately explained only in reference to God. This theocentrism is the driving force of *bal tashcit*, for it gives meaning to the reasons behind a prohibition of wanton destruction. Destruction is not an evil because it harms human life—we humans should not believe that God sends the rain for us—it is an evil because it harms the realm of God and his creation.

*Id.* at 66.

notes: "Anthropocentric oppression of nature, from this perspective, is not a representation but rather a usurpation of divine sovereignty."<sup>188</sup>

### B. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

Job provides an example of the depth of duty that a Christian owes God and that should manifest itself, among the other responsibilities of a Christian, in actions protective of the environment. The activities of the Christian right, who have placed themselves in the national political spotlight and intentionally have made political action a part of their religious responsibility, add a wider dimension to the question of Christian responsibility. Should the Christian's responsibility to the environment translate into political action, and if so, how?

One can find no better example of individual Christian conscience stirred to political action than that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer harshly criticized the Christians of Germany for acquiescing to Hitler's genocide in order to preserve the establishment of the church.<sup>189</sup> He followed words with action, returning from safety in New York to work against the Third Reich as a counterintelligence agent deeply involved in the plots to assassinate Hitler.<sup>190</sup> When these plots failed, Bonhoeffer was imprisoned.<sup>191</sup> Weeks before the Allies liberated the German concentration camps, Bonhoeffer, his brother, and two brothers-in-law were executed on orders signed by Hitler.<sup>192</sup>

Environmental degradation is not Nazism, and most would agree that equating the two would denigrate the memory of those persecuted by Hitler. Hopefully, too, martyrdom will not be required in the democratic pursuit of environmental protection. But the commitment to political duty stemming from Christian conviction exemplified by Bonhoeffer reflects the potent force of moral suasion Professor Rose suggested, and parallels the call to political action felt today by many in the Christian right. Many of Bonhoeffer's teachings can be applied as well to the Christian's contemplation of environmental policy questions.

Bonhoeffer's theology of the individual Christian insistently asked: "[h]ow can we live the Christian life in the modern world?"<sup>193</sup> Bonhoeffer

<sup>188</sup> JAMES NASH, *supra* note 41, at 104.

<sup>189</sup> A TESTAMENT TO FREEDOM: THE ESSENTIAL WRITINGS OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER 44-46 (Geffery B. Kelly & F. Burton Nelson eds., 1990).

<sup>190</sup> *Id.*

<sup>191</sup> *Id.*

<sup>192</sup> *Id.*

<sup>193</sup> COST OF DISCIPLESHIP, *supra* note 179, at 49.

fer believed it to be a matter of spiritual life and death that modern Christians find methods of following the person of Christ in the circumstances of the present world—to respond to Christ as Peter did,<sup>194</sup> by dropping his nets and following.<sup>195</sup>

Bonhoeffer also struggled with the application of the Gospel to the life of the modern church.<sup>196</sup> He chided the German church for making Christianity easy, and for creating “cheap grace”: “Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace.”<sup>197</sup> Bonhoeffer defined “cheap grace” as: “the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without Church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without contrition. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the Cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”<sup>198</sup> He concluded: “We gave away the word and sacraments wholesale, we baptized, confirmed, and absolved a whole nation without asking awkward questions, or insisting on strict conditions.”<sup>199</sup> For Bonhoeffer, this dispensation of “cheap grace” resulted in a catastrophic political result, the acceptance by German Christianity of Hitler’s despotism.<sup>200</sup>

The connection between Bonhoeffer’s teaching of the Christian duty in the face of political adversity and the present question of Christian environmentalism is distinct, if not obvious, and carries startling ramifications. Compare Bonhoeffer’s indictment of German wartime Christianity with Leopold’s criticism of American environmentalism, which he linked to similar failures in American religious life: “The proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it. In our attempt to make conservation easy, we have made it trivial.”<sup>201</sup>

<sup>194</sup> *Matt.* 4:18–22.

<sup>195</sup> *COST OF DISCIPLESHIP*, *supra* note 179, at 65.

<sup>196</sup> *Id.* at 37.

<sup>197</sup> *Id.*

<sup>198</sup> *Id.* at 38.

<sup>199</sup> *Id.* at 47.

<sup>200</sup> *A TESTAMENT TO FREEDOM*, *supra* note 189, at 29, 43. In his *ETHICS*, Bonhoeffer minced no words in his condemnation of the church:

The Church confesses that she has witnessed the lawless application of brutal force, the physical and spiritual suffering of countless innocent people, oppression, hatred and murder, and that she has not raised her voice on behalf of the victims and has not found ways to hasten to their aid. She is guilty of the deaths of the weakest and most defenseless brothers of Jesus Christ.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, *ETHICS* 114 (Eberhard Bethge ed. 1965).

<sup>201</sup> *LEOPOLD*, *supra* note 50, at 210.

The cheap grace of Christianity that does not require care for God's creation and the cheap environmentalism of political action geared to achieve only a level of environmental protection that will not cause economic unpleasantness have coalesced in the Christian right. In the context of the holocaust, the failure to apply biblical principles to political action caused the failure of the Christian Church to make the sacrifices necessary to defend those persecuted by Hitler.<sup>202</sup> In the context of modern environmental questions, the end of "cheap grace" and cheap environmentalism will mean sacrificing the comfort of an overmaterialistic lifestyle and the powerful political allure of the appearance of endless national abundance in order to demand personal and corporate moderation in consumption and environmentally protective action.<sup>203</sup>

To Bonhoeffer, the very basis of Christianity was not a commitment to a church or system of belief, but to the person of Christ.<sup>204</sup> This creates a willingness to sacrifice personal preferences in order to do God's will. How, then, can the Christian condone actions taken for pleasure or profit in derogation of his responsibility as a steward of God's creation? When the Gospel itself calls the Christian to come and die,<sup>205</sup> and contains repetitive allusions to the necessity of sacrifice and death, including the crucifixion itself, how can a Christian believe that his attitude toward the system of nature that God created should be one of unthinking dominance? Christ instructs His disciples to work within God's creation, not to treat it as a resource of minimal spiritual

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<sup>202</sup> During his imprisonment, "Bonhoeffer's most bitter words were reserved for the churches. The churches, he said, were interested in fighting only a rearguard action for survival and preservation of their privileges and perquisites." A TESTAMENT TO FREEDOM, *supra* note 189, at 43.

<sup>203</sup> John B. Cobb, Jr., an early and prolific writer on Christianity and environmental ethics, applies terms very similar to Bonhoeffer's to the Christian's responsibility to live within a vision of strict responsibility instead of accepting "proposed visions of a future of increasing global affluence" that will lead to further waste. He states:

[F]or the Christian, hope stands in closest proximity to sacrifice. . . . We cannot circumvent the cross. Now as we face more clearly the limits of the human situation and the fact that poverty and suffering cannot be avoided even by the finest programs we could devise, we are forced to look again at the meaning of the cross for us. . . . In a world divided between oppressor and oppressed, rich and poor, the Christian cannot remain identified with the oppressor and the rich.

John B. Cobb, Jr., *Christian Existence in a World of Limits*, in RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS 172, 182-84 (Eugene C. Hargrove, ed. 1986).

<sup>204</sup> COST OF DISCIPLESHIP, *supra* note 179, at 73.

<sup>205</sup> *Id.* Bonhoeffer's famous quote is: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." *Id.*

importance: "God does not forsake the earth. He made it, He sent His son to it, and on it He built His Church."<sup>206</sup> Neither did the work of Christ overlook physical creation, for "[t]he renewal of the earth begins at Golgotha, where the meek one died, and from thence it will spread."<sup>207</sup> For the Christian to ignore a part in this renewal is to deny the duty to act as responsible vizier of God's creation. Conservation is not cheap; grace is not cheap. They are both elements of the Christian's costly relationship to God.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Conservative Christians who have not espoused a reasonable environmentalism have simply not thought seriously about the problem and have not studied the Bible to discover the scope of their duty in this regard. They have not constructed their own theology of the environment. The power of a new examination of environmentalism in the language of the Christian right is the power of a new environmental narrative to make environmental responsibility a centerpiece of Protestant theology. This narrative will persuade many more voters in the Christian right to protect the environment than will the protestations of environmental groups. Within the Republican Party and the insurgent Christian right, it is the Christian Church, and even more so, the Christian individual, that must become the agent of environmental protection.

How we answer Eliot's question is of core importance to the development of the Christian's relationship with God:

And you, have you built well, have you forgotten the cornerstone?

Talking of right relations of men, but not of relations of men to God?<sup>208</sup>

Leopold believed that we had forgotten to consider the relationship of man to his environment. Instead, we have forgotten to place our relationship with nature in its proper position as an element of our relationship with God. The fault is that of the individual, not that of the biblical literature. For the Christian, environmental protection should be based on something much deeper than an appreciation of

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<sup>206</sup> *Id.* at 93-94.

<sup>207</sup> *Id.* at 94.

<sup>208</sup> ELIOT, *supra* note 1, at 152.

the right of natural objects to exist or the right of man to profit from and enjoy his surroundings. Stewardship of the earth is a central element of the right relation between God and man. Without it, we fail to "build well" and at the end of the age will find ourselves sitting in our ruined house, looking helplessly into the eyes of the Shepherd, trying to explain why we have lost the sheep.