

Concerning Christianity and Environmental Ethics

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When I tell people I am a Christian, especially my fellow millennials, something like the invoking of a caricature usually occurs. Exactly what sorts of assumptions and imagery come to mind depends entirely on the individual's own experience with other "Christians." However, some of the elements are very common and widespread. Because of alliances formed in the 1980s, most Christians today align themselves with the Republican Party. I could write a separate essay for a plethora of issues, but one that stands out is environmental policy. The ethic employed by the GOP seems reckless to me, and seems to find little value in the preservation of the natural world. In my own study and exegesis of the Bible, an essential theme which runs from Genesis to Revelation is the role of Mankind as the caretakers of the Earth. In the following pages I hope to dismantle the majority Christian view of environmental ethics and replace it with one that is based on biblical texts and concepts--it should therefore differ radically. I write this paper as a plea, a small project in what should become a manifesto of reasons for Christians to rediscover what authentic following of Jesus looks like. Christian scholarship needs to be dedicated to rescuing Christianity from the American Dream; two concepts that should stand separated by an infinite chasm.

This paper needs chiefly to find how environmental ethics works within Christianity and the New Testament, but I do think it's necessary to sketch, briefly, the way things are and why--mainly because this presents what I am admittedly reacting against. The way things are now for Christians thinking about environmental ethics, I have found, is not necessarily (though it is somewhat) chiefly tied up in what text, whether Old or New testament, really has to say on the matter. In fact, there are a plethora of issues that Christians form their opinions about on the basis of the political party they most often associate with--the GOP.¹ Being a History major, I am

¹ I don't exaggerate here. In a Christianity Today article from 2012, a study (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/september-web-only/will-evangelicals-vote-for-mormon.html>) was included which found that Evangelicals voted for the GOP's presidential candidate in 04, 08, and 12 around 75% of the time with little fluctuation--suggesting that candidate is less important than party.

interested in how this has come to pass. How did Christianity become a bedfellow to the GOP and political right in the United States? Even a cursory glance through recent decades can begin to piece the puzzle together. In 1979, a group called “The Moral Majority” was founded by Rev. Jerry Falwell--pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. Falwell was spearheading a coalition of conservative, evangelical voters angered about a variety of social issues and other “ills” that plagued America. The central message of the movement can be surmised in Falwell’s own words: “What’s happened to America is that the wicked are bearing rule. We have to lead the nation back to the moral stance that made America great...we need to wield influence on those who govern us.”² The group did wield considerable influence in American politics after the election of Ronald Reagan. Space and time do not allow for a deep analysis of why or how the movement garnered so much popularity. Cheaply put, the formation and growth of this movement can be mainly attributed to the conservative backlash against the many upheavals of the 1960s and 70s. Throughout these decades, issues such as women’s liberation, the gay rights movement, the sexual revolution, secularism in schools, and fears of social disintegration, and abortion also provided fodder for evangelical and fundamentalist Christians. In supporting conservative candidates in the election of 1980, the Moral Majority sought to elect those who would pass key items on their agenda; however, the 1980s ended with the main goals of the movement unachieved. The 1980s did not, however, bid adieu to the Moral Majority. Though the team name has been discarded, fundamentalist Christians still overwhelmingly link themselves to conservatism and the GOP. Evangelicals today, based on Barna’s 9-point evangelical definition, are committed to the Republican Party over the Democrats by a margin of 59 percent to 16 percent.³ This is largely because the same social

² Eileen Oginitz, “Evangelicals Seek Political Clout,”Chicago Tribune, January 3, 1980.

³ Audrey Barrick, “How does Evangelical Faith Measure Up?,”Christian Post, March 6, 2007.

issues that existed in the 1980s are still up for debate today. I set up this part of the paper in this way because of the conclusion I am near to drawing. I will now provide examples of mainline Christianity and Christian voices making comments about environmentalism, global warming, etc. The question on the table is why do these people, such a vast majority of them (evangelical Christians) think this way? If one goes searching for well written arguments based on christian texts in support of the views expressed by many of today's Christians (their disclosure in this paper forthcoming), they will struggle as I have in researching for this paper. The same sort of thing would happen if you went looking for good text-based (and I really mean Bible-based) reasons for why so many Christians side with republicans on economic issues, taxation, and welfare. It's because they haven't done much studying on their own, and they haven't gone to the text for themselves. They found allies in politics during the 1980s--an alliance based mainly on issues that are much easier to see exegetically in the New Testament. It seems that because they felt so comfortable with the GOP's position on social issues, that they assumed these folks probably had it right on the economy, and the environment as well.

At this point I need to prove that I'm not just attacking a figment of my imagination. At the "Catalyst" Christian pastor's conference in 2013, pastor Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington said, "I know who made the environment and he's coming back and is going to burn it all up. So yes, I drive an SUV."⁴ The comment was received by a happily supportive and roaring crowd. In a March 12 sermon, Rev. Jerry Falwell claimed that "scientists who are not on the payroll of the government" believe that "the jury's still out" on the existence of human-caused global climate change. Similarly, in a March 5 sermon, Falwell said of global climate change, "I don't think the science supports it. In fact, it is a small minority of scientists who suggest it's a human caused phenomenon."⁵ James Calcamuggio, theology professor at a Baptist seminary,

⁴ Hemant Mehta, "Pastor Mark Driscoll," Friendly Atheist. May 4, 2013.

⁵ Media Matters Staff, "Falwell Dismissed Scientific Evidence for Global Warming," Media Matters.com.

in an article on global warming says the phenomenon is of no concern because, “God has controlled Earth’s temperature since the beginning of creation.”⁶ I wasn’t sure which issue within environmental ethics I wanted to use as a case study, but I will allow these three cited sources to be decisive in my stead. Global Warming has become a favorite topic of debate not only in churches, but the culture at large.⁷ Any time the Church and the broader culture are talking about the same issues, it’s hugely significant that the Church respond cautiously, graciously, humbly, and well reasoned. After all, it acts as God’s ambassador--wouldn’t want to misrepresent him. The three examples I provided above illustrate the popular opinion of American Christians when it comes to global warming. I’d like to take the quotes one at a time, trying to get to the root of each man’s justification for his view on global warming. Firstly I will start with Falwell. He seems to just be skeptical, and he doesn’t make any appeal to something the Bible says, as he would commonly do for his other favorite debate topics. No cleverly fashioned one-liner, no quote from the King James, very atypical for him. But I don’t blame him, because as I will imminently show, there is little place to turn. But for the sake of argument, I won’t let him off the hook quite yet. He did not reference any specific data set when he said that for most scientists “the jury is still out”, but I have found a couple. The Consensus Project, devoted entirely to the issue of man made Global Warming, found that in a survey amongst 31,000 climate experts around the globe, 97% agree that human activity is the major cause of global warming in the last 30 years.⁸ Similarly NASA.GOV has a report showing that “Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are very likely due to human activities.” To be fair, Falwell does critique those who receive government funding, like NASA, but their data in this

March 14, 2006.

⁶ James Calcamuggio, “Who Controls the Thermostat?,” Baptist Bulletin, December 4, 2009.

⁷ For clarity’s sake, the rising temperature of Earth is virtually uncontested. The debate is the cause, specifically whether human activity is significant.

⁸ Skeptical Science, “Is There a Scientific Consensus on Global Warming?” January 21, 2012.

report comes from a privately funded and independent source.⁹ His quote is unique in that unlike Driscoll and Calcamuggio, there is no appeal to any aspect of theology or scripture, but clearly his claim doesn't hold. For this reason, if there is to be christian objections to a determined commitment to reducing the effects human beings have on climate change, justification will have to be found in a source other than a majority expert consensus. As a Christian, I believe in the trustworthiness of the Bible. So if it could be shown to me by virtue of definitive exegesis that the Bible--and therefore God--are opposed to the view which says human beings can and are affecting climate change in a negative way, then that would be that, I would stand with Driscoll and Calcamuggio. But now I'd like to look at their comments and prove their faults. In Driscoll we see the all too familiar appeal to eschatological definites as a license for human irresponsibility. The basic underlying assumption on his part, is an understanding of Jesus' return as one that will see the destruction of this earth and the creation of a new one. This view is actually quite a new understanding of Christian eschatology, and by no means how the first generations of Christians read St. John's book of Revelation.¹⁰ In a future section of the paper I will examine the passages of scripture that are most often distorted in support of Driscoll's view, but first we must also examine, briefly, Calcamuggio. He uses another very common concept: God is sovereign, therefore our actions are only free and effective in so far as he allows. We shouldn't fear climate change, because if things really do get too hot and too dry, God will simply reverse the trends. As an orthodox Christian, I wholeheartedly affirm the doctrine of God's sovereignty, but in the pending section of this paper that includes exegesis of actual texts from the Bible, it will become clear that far from violating God's sovereign will, human action is exactly the vehicle through which God reigns on Earth--it has been his plan since the beginning. What remains now is that I

⁹ W. R. L. Anderegg, "Expert Credibility in Climate Change," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*

¹⁰ N.T. Wright has much to say about this in his book *Surprised by Hope*. Specifically the section entitled, "What the whole world's waiting for".

restore meaning to the texts and concepts critiqued above, and then layout in detail what is to be the Christian Environmental Ethic.

The best and most efficient way to go about revising the misunderstood texts and concepts seems to be at the same time using them in support of an alternative view of environmental ethics. In anticipating the trajectory of this paper based on my design, the eventual case study on global warming will have much to do with the concepts of stewardship, biblical humanity, the value of creation, God's order and purpose for creation, and the principle of corruption and redemption. Also, with special relevance to the curriculum for PHIL 3180-002, I am going to include a section on the moral obligation of Christians for the liberation of nature that comes as a result of the biocentric view that I will establish from Christian texts and their inferred concepts. In a nutshell, both Christians and non-Christians believe that there are only two perspectives on environmental ethics: the free market view, and the environmentalist view. I am proposing a third environmental ethic--the Christian Environmental Ethic. The task is not simple because the Bible does not explicitly direct us on how to handle the difficult environmental issues of today. For this reason many have assumed that no moral issues are at stake, but such reasoning incorrectly assumes the Bible always addresses moral issues directly. The Bible is not an exhaustive set of moral edicts; rather it provides an ongoing narrative with principles from which we can derive God's perspective on moral issues. Despite what may be common thought, the Bible has very little "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" language.

Overview of the Christian Environmental Ethic

Unlike the free-market Republican view, which I have admitted is held by many Christians, the biblical view acknowledges God and his purposes. The biosphere has inherent worth because God created it. It is fascinating to me on one level and sickening on another, that the same people who apply the logic which says that: "because God made it-it therefore has

value” to the abortion issue, are most often the people who side with the GOP on environmental issues. Though time doesn’t allow for it, there should be some comprehensive work done that suggests Christianity be pro-life in every area of debate. Not only abortion, but also the environment, capital punishment, and gun control--but I digress. Before discussing the principles of what I’m calling the Christian Environmental Ethic, I want to point out that even initially it is chiefly different from other perspectives. A starting question: what is the ultimate good for mankind? The American dream and the free market view says that material prosperity is the ultimate good. The environmentalist view says that man’s achieving a moral or ethical dimension from which he will protect the biosphere is the ultimate good. In the Bible, and so for Christianity, the ultimate good is what the Apostle Paul calls “Life”--which stated truly is to be morally perfected and made like Jesus Christ, and to be wholly satisfied in glorifying God. God has designed the relationship between man and nature as part of man’s journey towards Life. Therefore environmental ethics is hugely significant to the Christian life and Life.

The view against which I am reacting, for the most part, is the free market view of the GOP and most christians. Against this view, I think it suffices to say that God has given man a moral obligation to manage nature according to moral principles and not just economic efficiency. Texts like Genesis, Leviticus 9:9-10, and Deuteronomy 22:6-7 and 25:4 clearly demonstrate that whether or not an action is right should be based on moral implications, not economic considerations.

Stewardship and Creation Value

It feels as though the real meat of my argument arrives here. Thus far I have only been deconstructing and laid the bare frame of my alternative ethic. Now, at last, we arrive at the crux of all things--or at least insofar as I’m concerned with anything for this paper.

The principle of Creation Value recognizes God as the creator of all things.¹¹ Revelation 4:11 states: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” The Bible also teaches that though God allows humans to utilize elements of nature, God retains ownership. Psalm 24:1 states: “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” God also loves and enjoys all that he has created. Psalm 145:16-17 states: “You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.” Thus, my first conclusion is that God places value on elements of nature apart from human use and human-centered values. This God-centered inherent value of nature is termed *theistic intrinsic value*. (by Barrett and Bergstrom)¹²

Fundamental to Environmental Ethics, regardless of the perspective, is the role of humanity. On the Christian view, the question is, now that I have shown creation has value apart from human value, how should the Christian behave towards the environment? Understanding this is probably the most central piece of my argument. What does it mean to be human?¹³ The Bible is very clear and also very concerned with answering this question, requiring a detailed answer from me.

In the first two chapters of the first book of the Bible, we find the Jewish and Christian accounts of the creation of the world. Modern controversies like the age of the earth and evolution have imposed questions and interpretations on the creation story that were of no concern to the author and original audience. When you go to the text understanding the worldview of the author and thus the historical cultural context of the book, a rather different kind of story emerges. This is not a hammer argument against evolution, nor is it a science textbook.

¹¹ Genesis 1, Psalm 146:6, Acts 14:15, Revelation 4:11

¹² Barrett, Christopher B. and John C. Bergstrom. “Economics of God’s Creation,” BACE. Issue 31, 4-23-1998.

¹³ if you’re looking for a good time, try asking a humanist-they should be the experts.

If possible, it would be good for you to read Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis before reading on in this paper, just so we're on the same page.¹⁴ Without a doubt, the questions of your conditioned worldview were imposed on the text when reading. But when we look at this story about the natural world's origin with an ancient mind, the picture being painted couldn't be clearer. This is not about six literal days of creation, this is a temple story.¹⁵ This is about a God who is making a space for himself to dwell. The significance is not in the time it took him,¹⁶ but in how and why. If you were reading the story as an ancient you would have paid special attention to the last thing God puts into this new space he has created for himself. He creates man. Ancients knew that the last thing you do after building a temple is place an image of the god in the temple, so that everyone knows exactly who this temple is for and who it is they should be worshipping. In this way, Genesis 1 and 2 give us the essential thing to say about what it means to be human. We are created in God's image, as the representatives in his temple, showing everything else that he created who they are here for--who they are here to glorify. Being made in God's image has sometimes been understood to be this way: If God could look right at a human being it would be as if both were looking into a mirror. However, I think that view misses something essential to humanness and something essential to my argument. If human beings were created as the image of a god in a temple, then the point is not that we reflect god to himself, rather that we reflect god to the rest of creation. That the love of god is reflected off of human beings into the world, which then in turn reflect affection and praise back to God. It's as if all of the natural created world were instruments in a symphony and mankind is the director. This view of

¹⁴ I have no idea how much exposure my reader has to Christian theology. I would also like to issue a disclaimer at this point that the next couple pages may have a tendency to sound "preachy". I want this paper to be something I can give to academic theologians (my friends like Matt LaPine and Andrew Spink) for feedback. I've read quite a bit of theology and so sometimes it tends to just sort of flow out of my hands into typed documents. It does have a purpose, and it is important to my argument for environmental ethics. Bare with me Dr. Ben.

¹⁵ John Walton's book "The Lost World of Genesis One" deserves all the credit for my line of thought here.

¹⁶ Inter-Christian debate about the age of the Earth is as common as secular debate of the same thing.

Genesis and the Christian creation story have two implications for my argument: 1.) Christians are not to lord over creation, rather to serve as loving stewards.¹⁷ 2.) The environment is not irrelevant to Christian living because essential to Christian doctrine is the concept of man's stewardship as a means of representing God to the rest of the created order.

Were you to read on in the narrative of the Bible, you would learn that man failed at this vocation, violating God's plan, and for this reason the whole of creation fell into a state of decay. Spiritual death now plagues every part of creation, meaning that we are no longer in perfect harmony with God. It also means that the created world is no longer in a state of perfection, and so injustice exists. The good news of Christianity, is that God is faithful, and he will not abandon human beings as the crowning jewel of his creation--the bringers of his love, peace, justice, and perfect rule. There are so many layers of theology and doctrine that could be laid out here, but I will do my best to cut right to what's essential for this paper's topic. In Jesus Christ, God has begun a New Creation project. This is not Plan B; from the beginning, God has orchestrated the narrative to unfold this way so that his son would be all the more glorified. But the point is that God is at work, right now, to restore all of creation, and his human ambassadors to their former glory and proper vocations. Just as before the Fall of mankind, Christians are expected to fulfill the genuine human vocation of being God's image bearers, his ambassadors on earth. Christians have an obligation to to work for the liberation of the oppressed, to make peace, and to love and serve their neighbors, because Jesus first loved and served us--the greatest example of course being sacrificing himself upon a roman cross--punishment each of us deserve for rejecting God's plan for us as humans to be perfect moral representatives. The task before us now is to live as God had always intended for humans to live.¹⁸

¹⁷ Conceptually this term means the same thing today in our culture as it did to the ancients. Basically the point is that this is a person taking care (managing) of something that is owned by another.

¹⁸ And so I will apply what I have understood from Christianity about the ultimate good of mankind, management guided by morals, intrinsic value, and what it means to be human.

Rethinking Eschatology

I've been showing that the Christian Environmental Ethic stands opposed to modern conceptions of environmental ethics, but a good way to begin this section is to also mention that the Christian view of nature has been against common thought since its origin. Plato's philosophy influenced the Gnostic view of the physical world that arose within the first-century. Followers of Gnosticism taught that the spiritual world contains all that is good, and everything in the physical or material world is bad.¹⁹ Therefore Gnosticism would say that nature has a negative value and is something that should be disregarded in a person's life. Christians in the modern church who say that "nature doesn't really matter because it's part of the physical world" are just employing a very old idea, not based on scripture, but on an old philosophy external to the Bible. As pointed out by the Christian thinker Francis Schaeffer, "the greatest testimony to the lasting value and importance of the physical world is that Jesus Christ's physical body was resurrected from the dead and exists today in the unseen spiritual world."

At this point I would like to show that the Christian Environmental Ethic is necessary because of God's future plan. This is converse to an ethic in spite of God's future plan.²⁰ Many Christians today have misunderstood an essential theme of the biblical narrative, and what is also a major concept of Paul in his letters found in the New Testament. Basically the idea is that this world is bad, and so Jesus and the salvation he offers is a rescue operation--designed to snatch people out of this world and into heaven. That seems wrong to me on two counts: 1.) Rescue suggests removal, but the New Testament never conveys this idea. A more accurate term for what God is doing in the sending of his son is restoration. 2.) The point of God saving people is not to snatch them away, it is to colonize Earth with the life of heaven.²¹ We are not

¹⁹ Brown, Collin. *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968.

²⁰ remember Driscoll's remark about Jesus coming back as a justification for his SUV and a general disregard for environmental awareness. Beneath the rhetoric is an interpretive decision about eschatology.

²¹ A major influence of mine, already referenced once, N.T. Wright (historian/theologian) has written about

saved for the sake of being saved. We are saved so that we may enter into the mission of heaven--new creation by means of restoration which looks like loving our neighbors, being charitable, generous, and working towards justice for the poor and oppressed.²²

Understanding what salvation is all about is the first part, and it leads to a fuller understanding of what God's end plans are.²³ Perhaps the most significant theme in all of scripture, the one message that is conveyed from cover to cover is this: God is faithful. In the beginning God created mankind to be his image. Mankind failed at this vocation, and so God chose the nation of Israel to serve as his image. Israel failed at this vocation, and so we arrive at the climax and the chief mystery of the faith, God became a man in the person of his son Jesus. Jesus is the image which we are now called to duplicate--by the power of the Holy Spirit we strive to live as citizens of Heaven. The point here, is that God never gave up on mankind as his chief creation, his image bearers. God has been faithful to mankind and so he has been faithful to give creation the image of the God it always should have been worshipping. Thus, God has not abandoned the temple of creation from Genesis One. He is presently working to make all things right, and how? Through the one creature that he made with a capacity for such work. That's the point of creation, salvation, and the biblical narrative. God is demonstrating his faithfulness in a relentless pursuit of mankind.

Where does all this fit into Environmental Ethics? If God's purposes are chiefly about restoration and not rescue. And if salvation is about making people fit for image bearing once again, then the next step is obvious. Through mankind, God is working to make this world right again--a return to the state of perfection found in Genesis One, before sin, death, and decay.

this concept at length towards the end of his comprehensive 700 page volume on the Resurrection.

²² Psalm 34:18, Proverbs 14:31, Matthew 5:1-4, Proverbs 22:16, Psalm 146:7. A massive list could be spelled out here.

²³ The reason for the earlier elaboration on mankind and being created in God's image finds its grounding here.

This means a world where humanity and the rest of creation live in union. One of my favorite passages in the Bible is Revelation 21 and it's important for consideration in this study:

---"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away²⁴, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."---

The plan of God is not to lay waste to the natural world and replace it with a new one, it is to bring heaven and earth together once again. The point of "new heavens and new earth" is not the newness, it is that they are mentioned together--that they are in union once again, just as it was in Genesis. God is returning to dwell in his temple of creation. So it turns out that he still loves what he made in Genesis, humans and the entirety of the natural world. Thus there is no merit in saying that human activity's effects on the natural world are irrelevant because human activity is precisely the vehicle through which God plans to usher this world into its former state

²⁴ the greek word for "pass away" doesn't mean "destroy or annihilate". It means "to be in the past, behind, depart, be past". It was going to change from one form to another.

of perfection.²⁵ Hence the work of justice, including environmentalism is one that each and every Christian must be part of.

Comparing the Christian Environmental Ethic and the GOP

Before arriving at the case studies I just wanted to summarize and simplify the mass of words to this point:

Question	Free-Market GOP	Christian
What is the ultimate good for mankind?	Material prosperity	bearing the image of God
What is the purpose of nature?	Man's material needs	God's temple
Immediate good?	Profit	Brings God glory
Mechanism for management?	Supply/demand	Moral
Model of dominion?	Absolute ruler, CEO	Ambassador, Steward
Man's Responsibility?	maximize economic efficiency	live simply/morally; maintain God's order
Does nature have intrinsic worth?	No	Yes

²⁵ remember the meaning of salvation. Not to snatch people away. God is assembling a people for himself that will work to restore his temple of creation. Christians are bringers of peace and justice (should be).

Case Study #1: Animals

I have mentioned that Christians have an obligation to work for the justice or liberation of the oppressed. One billion people live in poverty. Some forty thousand die each day from hunger and related causes. Many others live under political oppression that removes most basic human freedoms from their lives. We, Christ's Church and humanity in general, don't seem to be doing much of a job in addressing these problems, so as I am about to introduce another major concern, I feel the weight of redressing human plight. But I think that question, "why add another gigantic problem?" indicates the narrow horizon of our concern and our misunderstanding of that plight as well. Is our only objective to be healthy and free people, and if so do we really believe that can be achieved without concern for the rest of the living world? I have mentioned the union of man and creation earlier in this paper. Clearly from Genesis and from Revelation, God's original and future intentions for the natural world is one of union, both man with creation, and God with man/creation. If I am a restored image bearer of God, and I am obligated to work for the liberation of the oppressed²⁶, why have I and so many before me and like me today felt so unconcerned about this group? I am of course speaking of nonhuman animals.

We treat them as if they were things to be used as we please rather than as beings with lives of their own. We oppress animals in factory farming when we deny them such elementary freedoms as space in which to walk or stretch their limbs, in cruel animal experimentation, and in the destruction of habitats.²⁷ This latter is the main cause of the present-day extinction of whole populations. Some forms of so-called development are so oppressive that species themselves are becoming extinct at an alarming rate. In the process there is much suffering and misery. A conservative estimate of the current rate of

²⁶ Isaiah 1:17- "Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause."

²⁷ <http://challengeoppression.com/> , Our in class discussion dealt extensively with this.

extinction is one thousand species a year--and that was in a treatise from 1976.²⁸

Scientists estimate we're now losing species at 1,000 to 10,000 times the background rate, with literally dozens going extinct every day.²⁹

It seems to me that the main reason so many humans could be so unconcerned about this holocaust is that we assign no more than instrumental value to non-human animals. If we do decide to look after them, it is only because they look after us--means and not ends in themselves. This is a secular view of animals. One writer assumes that animals lack intrinsic value on the proposition that only beings capable of assigning value can have intrinsic value--a claim left unsupported.³⁰

A volume of work can and should be done on this issue, but for the sake of time and space, I will seek to diffuse the view mentioned above in support of a view that sees animals as ends as well as means. Firstly, intrinsic value is encapsulated in the experiencing of value. Only feeling confers intrinsic value. We recognize the intrinsic value in humans because they are experiencing entities--more than objects, they are subjects. They are not simply means, but ends in themselves. Alvin Plantinga is a philosopher that has written at length about intrinsic value and theism, and in one particular essay says, "My experiences are the most real thing about me. They are of value to me. Why the tremendous urge to live, even in the face of enormous suffering? We want to live." This urge to live is also a feature of the lives of nonhuman animals. There is much I could say about

²⁸ Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for Our Treatment of Animals*. London: Jonathon Cape, 1976.

²⁹ Chivian, E. and A. Bernstein (eds.) 2008. *Sustaining life: How human health depends on biodiversity*. Center for Health and the Global Environment. Oxford University Press, New York.

³⁰ Fox, Michael A. *The Case for Animal Experimentation: An Evolutionary and Ethical Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

experience, neurology, feeling, suffering, pleasure, and so on. But the importance of all this is that the recognition of intrinsic value in the creatures besides ourselves makes an ethical claim, an *environmental* ethical claim, upon us to recognize our obligation towards them. This would lead to a way of talking about animals as having rights that we should uphold.³¹

What is required now is a Christian biocentric ethic, and in reviewing what I've written to this point, that certainly seems an appropriate direction. The free-market view is clearly anthropocentric. There could be a case made for an anthropocentric Christian environmental ethic, however, it would need to pay large attention to the role of human beings. As I have said, that role is chiefly tied up in image bearing, which looks like justice working, which has led us to this. So in any case, it seems pretty clear that biocentrism is just more fitting. The dominant tendency has been to see nature as none other than the stage on which the drama of human life is performed. Nonhuman creatures are merely props, having no value other than their value to us; intrinsic value resides in humans alone. This view has often been taken as biblical.³² It is not. In the Genesis account of nature God finds goodness in things before and quite apart from the creation of Adam.³³ Jesus expressed the divine concern for the sparrows, even the grasses of the field.³⁴ If man is worth many sparrows then a sparrow's worth is not zero.

The recognition that the nonhuman animal is an end in itself and not merely a means to human ends explodes the assumption of traditional ethics. What is needed is a biocentric ethic that recognizes in every animal as well as humans, both ends and means.

³¹ Cobb, John B. "Ecology, Ethics and Theology." *Toward a Steady State Economy*.

³² Historically, the most notable to hold this view was the theologian Augustine, who suggested that since beasts lacked reason and therefore have no rights, we need not concern ourselves with their suffering.

³³ After each "day" God finds creation to be "good."

³⁴ Luke 12:6

Conservation movements rest on insecure foundations as long as they do not go beyond instrumental ethics for their justification. In a world in which humans are fast annihilating other species a conservation ethic requires that humans reduce their demands on the environment in favor of other species.

Case Study #2: Global Warming

Studies cited earlier in this paper conclude, overwhelmingly, that global warming is a result of human activity. Whereas the first case study required some rearranging, this issue is cut and dry. Rising sea levels, drought, and catastrophic weather like tornadoes and hurricanes can be linked to global warming. The point here is not to lay out the science of it all, but to understand, conceptually that global warming poses a serious threat to the Earth. What should the Christian response be? Instead of rushing to political parties, the Christian response should be to carefully seek instruction from the Bible--as has been done in this paper. All that remains is to apply that established Christian Environmental Ethic to this issue. Why does the Christian need to work to reverse global warming?

1. Because the Christian is commanded to love his/her neighbor. Because we all live on the same planet and are ultimately dependent upon the natural fruits of the earth for life-support, everyone has a stake in how the elements of nature and natural systems are used and managed. Mark Driscoll is right about Jesus coming back, but he really should take note of what he said the first time he was here: "love your neighbor as yourself." Without question, contributing to global warming is a negative action. If not driving an SUV could reduce one's contribution to that negative action, is it not the right thing to do? Since your action is contributing to a problem which affects future generations and even those living around you in the present, would it not be loving to cease?

2. Nature has intrinsic value because God has assigned it such. It is "good" in God's eyes

apart from mankind. Thus it should be good and valuable in our eyes. There is some ways in which this would hold as a strong argument even if I was willing to admit that this earth will be destroyed in the end. That's certainly not a mandate for carelessness or redefining value. We are part of the created order, and as such we should treat the rest of the created order with the dignity which has largely to do with remembering our vocation--

3. Stewardship is the task to which we have been called. Christians believe that through salvation, God is restoring humans to their former glory as his image bearers. If this is the case, then we must do everything in our power to live as the first humans were instructed to live. We must allow morality to be the guide to our actions, not economics. We have been entrusted to keep God's creation well and ordered. It is our duty to establish God's rule throughout this creation temple. What does that rule look like? One needs only to observe the example of how God ruled when he was here. Jesus served and loved. He was a far different emperor than Caesar, and that is the part that changes everything. The way of life for a Christian is radically different from that of the world, because we serve a king unlike the others. Caesar trampled the poor and sought to expand his empire through militaristic conquest and violent strength. The GOP has much more in common with Caesar than the Jesus of the New Testament, History, and the Early Church. God has restored us, that we might go forth and start restoration projects of our own. The environment, specifically the issues of animal liberation and reducing CO2 emissions, seem a perfect place to start.

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