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Noah's Ark Goes to Washington: A Profile of Evangelical Environmentalism

Des voix environnementales évangéliques, ce n'est pas très habituel, compte tenu du profil du militantisme des chrétiens de droite aux Etats-Unis. Et pourtant, les environnementalistes évangéliques ont constitué une partie éminemment visible de l'opposition aux tentatives du 104ème Congrès dominé par les Républicains d'affaiblir la loi sur les espèces menacées. Leur militantisme s'inscrivait dans une campagne plus vaste visant à convertir les chrétiens de droite aux préoccupations environnementales. Cet article esquisse un bref profil de l'environnementalisme chrétien aux Etats-Unis, et il trace ensuite un portrait plus détaillé de l'environnementalisme évangélique. Enfin, il situe cette activité vis-à-vis d'une discussion plus théorique sur la place de l'écologie religieuse dans la compréhension sociologique de l'action religieuse contemporaine au sein des les mouvements sociaux.

In the furor enveloping Washington over the legislative agenda of the Republican-dominated 104th US Congress and its Contract for America, some unexpected voices could be heard proclaiming a religious mandate to uphold the Endangered Species Act and other environmental legislation. Although all the polls suggest that the Republican majority, with its pro-development agenda, was elected with the strong support of religious conservatives, some of the most surprising voices were those of evangelical ecologists such as Cal DeWitt. DeWitt and others of the Evangelical Environmental Network were in Washington to demonstrate that not all religious conservatives agreed with the anti-environmentalism of the Congress: "people in their arrogance are destroying God's creation, yet Congress and special interests are trying to sink the Noah's ark of our day" (Au Sable, 1996: 1). Nor were they the only religious voices. Religious representatives from the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, a coalition of Catholics, Jews, mainline and evangelical Protestants, Eastern Orthodox and African-American churches also made their presence known in Washington through lobbying and a targeted 18-state mailing and letter campaign. So did state-level religious coalitions such as New Jersey Partners for Environmental Quality, an interfaith coalition, which sent a Jewish and Protestant delegation of 20 for a day of lobbying representatives and senators. This degree of religious environmental activity had been unheard of a decade earlier, and the amateur lobbyists, such as the New Jersey group, were still an anomaly for Congressional staffs in 1995.

My research has focused on the emergence of religious, particularly Christian, environmental activism since the mid-1980s. This article will briefly look at the characteristics and organizations within US Christian environmentalism that helped shape the activity witnessed by the 104th Congress, and will describe in more detail the growing evangelical environmental activity. These profiles are grounded in field research at both the national and local level over the period of 1987 to 1992 and continuing follow-up research through 1996. In both periods, materials from participant observation, interviews, and extensive tape and literature review together contribute to the following sketch of Christian ecology in general, and evangelical environmentalism in particular.[1]

The presence of a wide spectrum of religious ecological voices in Washington is surprising for several reasons. First is the common perception that the environmental movement is a non-religious movement. Lynn White's 1967 essay proclaiming the "huge burden of guilt" borne by Christianity for the ecological crisis helped to engender this perception.[2] Thus it became a common belief that Christians did not care about the environment.[3] Second, the wide spectrum is surprising because the mixed survey literature on the topic (a very hard one to research quantitatively) suggests a similar conclusion, arguing that the more biblically oriented one is, the less one is concerned about the environment (Kellert and Berry, 1981; Hand and Van Liere, 1984; Shaiko, 1987; Eckberg and Blocker, 1989). One of the chief problems with these studies is their operative definition of "Christian" with primarily conservative or fundamentalist characteristics. The more nuanced the categories measuring religiosity, the more mixed are the findings (Greeley, 1993; Kanagy and Willits, 1993). More recent survey data are documenting the growing religious environmental concern (Guth et al., 1993, 1995). Finally, the churches themselves were fairly quiet on the subject; prior to the mid-1980s, there were just a few scattered statements and a few books by concerned theologians on the subject (Cobb, 1972; Santmire, 1970). Although the growth of the environmental movement coincided with a period of religious involvement in the social movements of the day, religious environmental activity was scarce in comparison.

It was the anti-environmentalism of the Reagan administrations (1980–1988) that spurred rising secular and religious environmental concern (Dunlap, 1992; Sale, 1993). By 1990, the sense that the ecological crisis demanded a religious response had gained strong support. Well-known physicist Carl Sagan, along with others, issued a call for the cooperation of religious leaders and scientists, stating that "problems of such magnitude and solutions demanding so broad a perspective, must be recognized from the outset as having a religious as well as a scientific dimension" (*New York Times*, 20 January 1990). Pope John Paul II, in his January 1990 World Day of Peace address, pronounced that the "ecological crisis is a moral issue" and reminded Catholics that they have "a serious obligation to care for all of creation". In the decade or so since the Reagan years, the movement of religious ecology has grown into a multi-faceted and distinct branch of the resurging environmental movement. The contemporary anti-environmentalism of the 104th Congress stimulated yet another level of religious activism.

Christian Environmentalism in the US

There are three broadly defined "ethics" or "models" that have emerged among organizational proponents of Christian ecological activism in the United States.[4] Using the labels adopted by each group, these three models are "Christian stewardship", "eco-justice" and "creation spirituality". Each model is best seen as an ideal type, with much diversity and overlap to be found among adherents. Briefly characterized, these three positions reflect the differences and theological tensions between conservative, mainline, and liberal Christians.[5] (See Table 1 for further characteristics of the three ethics.)

Christian stewardship, the focus of this paper, is rooted in an evangelical interpretation of the biblical mandate for humans to be good stewards and to take care of the earth. A more detailed portrait is given below.

The eco-justice position links environmental concerns with already established church perspectives on justice issues, such as the just sharing of limited resources and issues of equity and rights. It focuses on the effects of environmental degradation on peoples of color and the poor. The United Church of Christ exposé of the placement of toxic waste sites overwhelmingly in the neighborhoods of peoples of color is a good example. The eco-justice position is linked closely with most of the mainline Protestant denominations and the National Council of Churches' Economic and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Working Group.[6]

Creation spirituality attempts to reorient people to understand the proper place of humanity as a part of a panentheistic creation as opposed to seeing humans as separate from creation, and God as outside of creation. From this more appropriate ecological place, humans must recognize the need to preserve the whole. Creation spirituality also seeks to reconceptualize God and religious ritual to reflect this new, more integrated understanding. It is exemplified by the work of Matthew Fox, Thomas Berry and physicist Brian Swimme, and institutions such as the Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality in California, Genesis Farms in New Jersey and the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York City. It appeals to disaffected Catholics, liberal Protestants, and the unchurched. It also appeals to non-Christians, since creation spirituality does not claim to be an exclusively Christian position.

Several other religious environmental perspectives influence and shape the development of these three models of Christian environmentalism in the US—ecofeminism, Native American religious traditions, and the ecological aspects of other religions. Ecofeminism in particular could be considered a fourth model, yet ecofeminism is both within and outside of the world of Christian ecological activism. Many ecofeminists see themselves as Christian (Ruether, 1992; Keller, 1990), while others explicitly reject Christianity (Spretnak, 1986; Christ, 1990) or understand ecofeminism apart from any religious grounding (Diamond and Orenstein, 1990). These ethics have taken shape in contrast to Christian environmental apathy or explicit anti-environmentalism. As various forms of religious ecology have emerged and garnered attention, explicit Christian anti-environmentalism has increased (Wright, 1995). We will look at this in more depth as part of a more detailed portrait of Christian stewardship, because it significantly influences the formulation of evangelical environmentalism.

TABLE 1
Christian-related Eco-theological Ethics among Organizational Proponents in the US

Characteristic	Christian stewardship ethic	Eco-justice ethic	Creation spirituality ethic
Starting Point	biblical mandate	social justice	cosmological physics
Theological Appeal	evangelical	mainline Christian social justice	liberal/unchurched; ecumenical
Images of God	transcendent; authoritative	transcendent; God of liberation	immanent; panentheistic
Image of Nature	Old Testament; land fecundity; God's Creation	human environment; natural resources	eco-system; creation as cosmos; universe
Human–Nature Relationship	gardener/ caretaker; revelation of Creator	sustainable use of natural resources for human betterment	proper human place in bio-system; balance/ harmony
Roots of Environmental Crisis	human sinfulness & disobedience to God	injustice/ inequality; economic systems	dualism; anthropocentrism; human alienation from nature
Central Environmental Issues	resource depletion; degradation of land & culture; agriculture; species extinction	toxic/hazardous wastes; health problems; pollution; agriculture	wilderness preservation; species extinction
Prescribed Response	correct doctrine; restore Christianity as guide; balance Bible and biology	correct praxis; government regulation; grass-roots organizing	correct being/ spirituality; new worldview
Social Change Orientation	homocentric =change individuals	sociocentric =change society	homocentric =change individuals
Intellectual Tools R = religion S = science	R = Bible S = biology	R = liberation theology S = social sciences	R = mysticism S = evolution; physics
Worldview	anthropocentric; premodern = religion as sacred canopy	anthropocentric; modern; focus on rights & justice	biocentric; post-modern; monism

Note: An earlier version of this table appeared in my article "Saving the Creation" (Kearns, 1995). Material from that table is used here with permission.

Christian Stewardship

Christian stewardship advocates a return to the biblical mandate to care for the creation, grounded in the Genesis 2:15 command to keep the garden and to be good stewards. The focus of Christian stewards on the Genesis passage is aimed at countering the frequent interpretation of dominion, also rooted in Genesis 1:27–28, as permitting humans to use the creation as they will. They point out that the command to be good stewards is one of the first given to humans by God. Ron Sider, a well-known spokesperson for the Evangelical Environmental Network, comments that

> ... the Bible teaches that the non-human creation has worth and significance, quite apart from its usefulness to humanity, and also that persons alone are created in God's image and called to be stewards of God's good garden. Anyone who thinks God created the non-human world merely for the benefit of persons has not read the Bible carefully. (1995:13)

This biblical grounding is key to the Christian stewards' evangelical and conservative audience, as evangelical historian Mark Noll notes:

> Groups like evangelical Protestants, who are committed in principle to the authority of the Bible, are a receptive audience for arguments that the scriptures teach a certain thing, and even if that certain thing is a new thing, and even if there might be some resistance to the idea, at least the argument gets a hearing among people who pledge themselves to live by the authority of the scriptures. (Baron, 1996)[7]

Their target audience is not an easy one. Conservative Christians are often characterized by their other-worldly attitudes (Hunter, 1983; Ammerman, 1987). This other-worldliness is manifest in the attitude that one's mind should be set on the higher things of salvation and future heavenly reward, or in an attitude of separatism, where Christians wash their hands of the world. An extreme example of how this other-worldliness contributes to the ecological crisis is reflected in the infamous statement of James Watt, Secretary of the Interior during the Reagan administration, justifying environmental disregard because God would make all anew in the new Jerusalem. More specifically, Watt, a member of the Assemblies of God, told Congress not be concerned with the long-term future of natural resources policy because "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns" (Martin, 1982). On the other hand, DeWitt, an environmental biologist and a chief spokesperson for various Christian stewardship groups, counters such other-worldliness, describing the ideal of Christian stewardship as

> ... a caring keeping of the Earth that works to preserve and restore the integrity of the created order, doing the will of the Creator, and seeking for the Creator's kingdom of integrity and peace—a kingdom devoid of human arrogance, ignorance and greed. Christian Stewardship is so living on Earth that heaven will not be a shock. (1987a: 2)

By failing to care for the creation, however, Christians are as guilty as secularists because "honoring the creator of the universe, the creator of the Earth, is not consistent with the destruction of the Earth" (Baron, 1996).[8]

For Christian stewards, it is human sinfulness, a familiar conservative refrain, that has resulted in the ecological crisis, and not Christianity, as Lynn White and others implied. DeWitt refutes White directly, arguing that "it is not the Judeo-Christian scriptures which lie at the root of this crisis, rather it is what these scriptures warn against: arrogance, ignorance and greed" (1987b: 1).

The task of Christian stewards is threefold. The first task is to quit sinning and act ecologically, for "to be saved means saving the Creation". As another active Christian steward and organizational staff member explained in an interview,

> I completely disagree with them [those who say Christians should be about other things]. It's our job description. Genesis 2: 15 says Adam was put into the garden to till and keep it, those words really mean serve and preserve. That's the beauty of the whole Genesis and Garden of Eden story—those principles are all the way through there and to say how does this relate to my faith, I want to say to them "are you a human being or what?" God's given you and me a real special responsibility. I think scripture is just full of it, over and over.

This is a change from the more typical conservative emphasis on individual redemption. Yet individual reform is certainly called for, as one Christian stewardship advocate explains: "the ecological problem ... is a problem concerning the way we think. We are treating our planet in an anti-human, god-forsaken manner" (Sherrard, 1990: 5). Their second task is to convince environmentalists that there is a biblical foundation for ecology, as Ron Sider suggests: "perhaps if more Christians engaged in environmental practices that were consistent with biblical teaching, more environmentalists would be ready to explore again the claim that a biblical framework would offer our best hope for a comprehensive earth healing" (1995: 14). Finally, they must convince other conservative Christians.

Converting other conservative Christians is a huge task. As already discussed, Christian stewards must counter a focus on individual redemption and other-worldliness. They must also counter a range of charges from anti-environmentalists. A common charge is that environmentalism is pagan, and that religious ecologists worship nature or the earth, as the title of popular evangelical author Tony Campolo's recent environmental book implies: *How to Rescue the Earth Without Worshipping Nature* (1992). It is not just the acknowledged paganism of Earth First! (Taylor, 1993), or even Matthew Fox and creation spirituality that are the targets of such charges, but even well-respected Christian stewards such as Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (1988) and Loren Wilkinson (1987). The most extreme anti-environmentalism is reminiscent of earlier anti-Christian conspiracy theories. In many fundamentalist jeremiads, environmentalism replaces communism as the agent of a new global order out to defeat Christianity, as in the following opening excerpt from a televised sermon by John Hagey entitled "The Environmentalist Agenda":

> Let me say concerning conservation that I am for clean air and clean water and the preservation of our natural resources ... But I have discovered from a great number of sources an environmental juggernaut that has come together and married the new world order crowd and the occultists who have the objective to control the United States

> economy through environmental concerns and laws that they have passed and will pass. Secondly, it is their desire to control the birth-rate of America. They would like to dramatically reduce the population of America because we consume so many natural resources. They are trying for a mark of 75 million, what happens to the other 175 million, I don't know, maybe abortion plays a part in that.

Because of this growing Christian anti-environmentalism, Christian stewards are careful not to be interpreted as worshipping creation (Wilkinson, 1980; Campolo, 1992). They are just as leery, however, of conservative creationism. Christian stewards see the overcoming of the conservative Christian bias against science as fundamental to the success of Christian ecology. They correctly fear that creationism undermines the appeal of ecology to conservative Christians. They also worry that an anti-science bias means that even well-meaning Christians do not have the scientific knowledge necessary for an adequate understanding of and response to the ecological crisis. DeWitt is disturbed particularly by two positions resulting from this tension between Christianity and science. With his gift for catchy phrases, he terms these two positions "Creationless Creationists" and "Creator-less Christians". For instance, the "Creationless Creationists" are glad to debate creationism versus evolution in the confines of a room, but rarely, according to DeWitt, "do you find them in the field [nature]" where they might actually encounter the creation. "Creator-less Christians", whom he feels are more representative of secularized modern Christianity, are exemplified in the snickers in the church meeting room that greet any mention of saving "some endangered species that has stood in the way of a proposed dam or highway". Rather, as DeWitt remarks, they understand saving human creations such as "Rembrandt's works ... [but] not so with the work of the Creator" (1990: 7–8). In order to correct these biases, one Christian stewardship organization, the Au Sable Institute in northern Michigan, with which DeWitt has long been affiliated, has been training environmental biology students from conservative Christian colleges while the current creation-versus-evolution debate has raged in the headlines. As their handbook states,

> ... the mission of Au Sable Institute is the integration of knowledge of the creation with biblical principles for the purpose of bringing the Christian community and the general public to a better understanding of the Creator and the stewardship of God's creation. (Au Sable, 1989: 1)

In an interview, Cal DeWitt summed up nicely the fine line that Christian stewardship walks: "it is [only] when you give either science or the scriptures short shrift that you run into problems."

To accomplish its tasks, Christian stewardship advocates are involved in a range of parachurch organizations, a common vehicle for religious environmental organizations. As Robert Wuthnow (1988) points out, these special purpose organizations are often able to elicit stronger commitment than denominational agencies. For evangelicals, this is particularly true because the larger denominational world is less receptive, if not hostile, to their concerns. Some of the earliest work[9] in the 1980s was undertaken by an

interdisciplinary faculty group at Calvin College, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson's New Creation Institute, and the Au Sable Institute, with which the New Creation Institute merged when Granberg-Michaelson joined the World Council of Churches staff in Geneva. The Au Sable Institute has also hosted a number of important summer forums on Christian-based ecology that are open to all. Another active early organization was the Eleventh Commandment Fellowship (ECF), which was instrumental in forming, initially in conjunction with a range of Protestant and Catholic activists, the North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology (NACCE) in 1985.[10] NACCE's initial aim was to "elucidate Christianity's ecological dimension", a motto it retained even after it split along conservative/liberal theological lines. The splinter organization, the North American Conference (now Coalition) on Religion and Ecology (NACRE) was more supportive of creation spirituality and the theology of Thomas Berry, which had been heavily criticized by the ECF participants at the initial NACCE conference.[11] The work of these stewardship organizations is being expanded in the 1990s by the Christian Society of the Green Cross (founded by Fred Krueger, who was also instrumental in founding ECF and NACCE), whose first publication appeared in November 1994, and the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), the evangelical component of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), founded in 1993.[12] Other less prominent organizations are also involved in Christian stewardship.

There are other signs of conservative Christian receptivity to an environmental gospel. For instance, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has produced a book on environmental issues in order to, in the words of Richard Land, executive director of the SBC's Christian Life Commission and a recognized conservative eco-theologian (1992), "combat what is a real bad image among rank-and-file Southern Baptists about the environmental movement, while at the same time speak to our concern for the environment" (Gonzalez, 1994). The editors of *Christianity Today*, the most widely circulated conservative Christian magazine, announced that "it's not easy being green. But the time has come for evangelicals to confront the environmental crisis"(1992: 14). The magazine has run numerous articles on the topic of ecology, reflecting the growing prominence given to the topic within some conservative circles. There is now enough activity that one can speak of a range of eco-theological positions within evangelical Christianity.[13]

It is the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) that recently has received the most attention, in part for activities such as lobbying Congress. The EEN's formation and inclusion within the NRPE coalition was significant in itself. In 1994, as a part of that coalition, EEN mailed out information packets of evangelical Protestant theological teaching and study resources on the environment to congregations across the country. Then in 1996, as part of a larger million-dollar campaign directed at preserving and strengthening the Endangered Species Act, EEN took out television ads warning Christians "don't let the special interests sink the Endangered Species Act".[14] EEN also mailed 38,000 "Let the Earth Be

Glad" packets to congregations in 1996 as part of its campaign to enlist churches as "Noah congregations". By summer, 1000 congregations had signed on.[15]

The figure of Noah is central to Christian stewardship. Christian stewards do not think that the image of Noah's ark should be relegated to a children's story. To them, the message it contains is vitally important to everyone, as one advocate explained in an interview:

> God gave Adam [the] responsibility [of naming the animals] which really means us as humans, so God was really placing a value on all those species, very strongly in fact, by doing that. The story of Noah and the ark, it's no coincidence—it doesn't really matter whether all the animals on this earth, the complete diversity of this earth, fit on an ark or not. It's frankly hard to conceive that they could have, but that's not the point at all, the point of the story is that God cared for everything, it says all of them, two by two, every species out there. There's Noah in that guardian role. I like to call Noah the first conservationist.

The moral to the story, as drawn by this Christian steward, is that "as a Christian I feel charged to protect diversity because that's a responsibility that God has given me". Similarly, DeWitt and EEN feel that the story of Noah is pertinent to the debate over the Endangered Species Act: "the power of the story is that the individual species are really treasured by the creator, they reflect God's glory, and that it's not for us to make the decision to wipe them off the map" (Baron, 1996). The story of Noah also resonates for the Clinton administration's Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbit, as does the larger message of Christian ecology. Babbit (1996) admits to a conversion, adding, while addressing an Oregon interfaith coalition, that what is striking about Noah is that he didn't just save those "charismatic species" or ones good for medicine.[16]

Many conservatives are unhappy with the EEN's criticism of the Republicans in Congress and, even though they support the Christian Coalition, hasten to criticize the EEN for mixing religion and politics. Representative Don Young of Alaska, a key and powerful anti-environmental voice, chastised the EEN because "Americans expect religious leaders to abide by a higher standard ... don't use the pulpit to mislead people".[17] Others, such as conservative Christian columnist Cal Thomas, hasten to point out the dangers of associating with the wrong type of religious environmentalism (see also Bandow, 1992) as a way to warn against such activism: "Babbit's theology comes close to animism ... clearly we should be good stewards of the earth, but if Babbit would consult a Gideon Bible the next time he's in a motel room, he would learn of the admonition to worship the Creator and not the things He created" (Thomas, 1996). Thomas goes on to conclude that "many political and theological liberals need a cause to substitute for their moral obtuseness on such issues as abortion and homosexual behavior. They've found it in the worship of animal and plants." As Young's and Thomas's charges indicate, Christian stewards have broken ranks and committed treason within the world of conservative Christian political activism.

For this reason alone, Christian stewardship activism is significant. It contributes a new voice both within evangelicalism and within religious

environmentalism. In addition, as already discussed, it represents a counterforce to the focus on individual redemption, material success (the health and wealth Gospel of many televangelists) and a disregard for the natural world found within evangelicalism. It further counters the currents of creationism and an anti-science bias, and the wise-use "environmentalism" or anti-environmentalism found within fundamentalism. Furthermore, conservative Christians are a growing presence in the United States and their influence is often felt in legislative halls across the country. Speaking as evangelicals, Christian stewards may gain a hearing in Congress where other environmentalists do not. This makes them attractive to other religious and secular environmental groups, who gain the perceived power and presence of a conservative Christian voice without the larger Christian Coalition agenda. As Jim Jantz of the Endangered Species Coalition comments, "the testimony of religious leaders ... will get the attention of a lot of legislators who are not going to respond just to the traditional environmental groups" (Baron, 1996).

Christian stewards have shown themselves willing to risk the denunciations of conservatives such as Thomas and Hagey and to be associated with other Christian environmentalists. We can better understand their willingness by examining the emergence of religious environmentalism in the United States within a broader theoretical perspective.

The Emergence of Christian Environmentalism

One obvious factor behind the emergence of religious, and specifically Christian, environmentalism is the success of secular environmentalism. Polls repeatedly show that the overwhelming majority of Americans are concerned about the environment. The success of the environmental movement made environmental concern a more likely good needed by the churches. As environmentalism spread, the relative silence of the churches grew more noticeable. The youth of the 1960s sought ways to express the larger implications of the environmental message. As the youth of the 1960s and environmentalism have matured, some have carried both their ecological concerns and their spiritual searching into organizations outside of traditional Christianity. Many adherents of creation spirituality fit this pattern. Others, who remained in the churches and encouraged their social justice stances, fought to have the justice implications of environmental problems, the eco-justice perspective, become a part of the Church. Still others, the most biblically oriented and part of the larger tide of more vocal and visible conservative Christians, sought to demonstrate that environmental concern, contrary to popular opinion, is central to their Christian identity.

It is not just the success of the secular environmental movement, a spillover effect, but the way that the movement developed that has contributed to the emergence of religious environmentalism. As the mainstream of the environmental movement developed into primarily technocratic organizations filled with scientists and lawyers that no longer addressed the larger

picture of the value system behind environmental problems (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; Dowie, 1992), a space for moral voices was created. Many Christian ecologists were already involved in secular environmental organizations and found them wanting. This is the critique cited by many Christian stewards who were motivated by a religious understanding that they felt unable to voice in secular environmental organizations. The increasing awareness of the complexity of the issues also created a need, in some, for moral grounding for the difficult decisions that must be made. Carl Sagan's call for the cooperation of religious leaders and scientists reflects this need, as does the formation of the NRPE in response to that call. The linkage of issues of nuclear and toxic wastes disposal, along with the decline of the nuclear peace movement, also led to religious involvement in environmental issues. Many Christian stewards, such as Ron Sider or Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, were already active in peace issues.

James Beckford argues that religious responses to the "new" social movements, such as peace and ecology, are more salient than would be expected in secularized modern society because of their ability to link practical responses with holistic, ideological frameworks. The World Council of Churches theme of "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" is an attempt to unite these concerns.[18] Movements such as those embodied in the WCC theme all display concern for the quality of life rather than more structural issues such as labor conditions, problems of distribution and political participation. Thus, Beckford argues, "conditions of advanced industrial societies actually favor the production of types of discourse that are particularly sensitive to cultural, and therefore religious, considerations" (1990: 5). This is a pattern that Ronald Inglehart observed in his multinational study of cultural shift: "a Postmaterialist worldview is emerging that shows a relatively great concern for the meaning of life, and places renewed emphasis on the sacred—though it tends to see the sacred in nature rather than in churches" (Inglehart, 1990: 433).

Additionally, the new social movements, and in particular ecology, are expressions of increasing globalization. Religious responses to this global sense are particularly likely since religion is concerned with the whole. Ecology, both as a science and as a social movement, has played an integral role in making us aware of our oneness, as represented by the now common environmental poster of the fragile planet floating in the darkness of space. The expansion of industrialized economies into a world (as opposed to national) system also contributes to globalization. As the industrial economy spread, whether capitalist or communist, its expansion brought global environmental problems such as air and water pollution, waste disposal, resource depletion, the hole in the ozone layer, acid rain, deforestation, and habitat destruction that are intimately linked with industrial society. Global threats such as nuclear weapons and overpopulation also reinforce the sense of global interdependence. Reactions to these varied manifestations of globalization in religious terms are therefore to be expected. (Beyer, 1994)

Finally, we can understand the emergence of Christian stewardship and religious environmentalism as part of what historian William McLoughlin

(1978) describes as the process of cultural revitalization. When our existing cultural patterns no longer work because conditions have changed, McLoughlin argues, religious awakenings or revitalization movements arise to provide new "mazeways".[19] Sociologist Ann Swidler (1986) would describe this process as a search for a new "tool kit", for it is primarily in "unsettled times" that we become aware of the bad fit between values and action. What once seemed "natural", i.e. our relationship to the "natural" world or creation, becomes questionable and uncertain. In such periods, cultures find that their "tool kits" don't work; in other words, a "retooling" is needed. Thus, unsettled times produce "bursts of ideological activism" and "competing ways of organizing action" as new tool kits are formulated and tried out.

Religious ecology, in general, embodies a search for new mazeways or a new tool kit to deal with the growing sense of ecological and cultural crisis embodied in the message of environmentalism. McLoughlin's description of awakenings as "periods when the cultural system has had to be revitalized in order to overcome jarring disjunctions between norms and experience, old beliefs and new realities, dying patterns and emerging patterns of behavior" aptly fits the sense of religious ecologists (1978: 10). Religious perspectives are particularly salient to this sense of disjunction between values and actions. According to McLoughlin, the process of revitalization involves two distinct types of religious response.[20] The traditionalist response searches for relatively minor adjustments to fix things; the more radical response searches for a complete new synthesis and new symbols. In between is a range of attempts to reformulate or retool beliefs and actions to respond to the sense of crisis.

Conclusion

Christian stewardship provides the minor retooling of a conservative religious worldview that enables some conservative Christians to respond to the ecological crisis. It presents an alternative to denying that there is a crisis, or to just sitting back and saying that God is in charge. Christian stewardship, however, must carefully select the tools it employs. It is exactly the globalism inherent in ecology, and the range of related issues, that makes environmentalism a hard sell in conservative Christian circles, as Hagey's jeremiad illustrates. All talk of oneness is suspect, and the line between worshipping the Creator versus the creation is drawn differently by various conservatives. The strong linkage of conservative Christianity with capitalism and "the American way" makes it difficult to preach any message critical of economic practices. Furthermore, the issue of overpopulation is a difficult one for Christian stewards, as it is for all Christian environmentalists, because of the conservative religious opposition to birth control and abortion, as well as the justice implications of reducing the populations of developing nations versus reducing the consumption of developed countries

such as the United States. In other words, Christian stewards must package their message carefully.

In addition to the thorny parts of environmentalism, it is due precisely to the complexity of environmental issues and problems, that Christian stewards (and other environmentalists) have had to work hard to find a receptive audience. The power of a campaign focused on a single issue, such as the Endangered Species Act (ESA), was a good vehicle for winning converts and gaining attention. Furthermore, in the ESA campaign, Christian stewards were able to present the issue in clear, biblical terms: Noah was the first conservationist and Noah's Ark presents a clear mandate for preserving species. Other environmental issues are not so easy. Formulas such as those put forth by Cal Thomas that equate all environmentalism with a liberal social agenda, or Hagey's that equate it with an anti-Christian new world order, or even with not believing that God is in control, will make it difficult. Christian stewards are clear that there are many that they will not reach; they recognize that their message will be hard for their fundamentalist brethren to hear. Yet their movement has gained momentum in the 1990s, enough to have nearly 150 signatories of evangelical organizations for "An Evangelical Declaration of the Care of Creation". The media attention garnered by the ESA campaign (e.g. *New York Times, Washington Post*, National Public Radio, ABC, and *The Lehrer Report*) will contribute to this momentum.

The Endangered Species campaign brought Christian environmentalism to the attention of many. For those who listen closely, it is evident that there is a growing range of eco-theological perspectives emerging in the United States and globally. Of these, perhaps the most surprising is that of Christian stewardship. These voices are significant because they can ground praxis in holistic frameworks; they express the religious implications of global interdependence. They are also significant because they bring a needed moral voice to the environmental movement, and are therefore often listened to in ways that secular environmentalists are not. The evangelical voices of Christian stewardship stand out both in contrast to secular environmentalism and in contrast to other conservative Christians. Their "defection" from the worldview of contemporary US conservative Christianity makes them particularly interesting to watch as they negotiate their identity both within US Christianity and within a social movement long used to viewing conservative Christianity as a villain.

NOTES

[1] See Kearns (1994, 1995) for more extensive portraits of Christian ecology and evangelical environmentalism.

[2] Eco-theologian Max Oelschlaeger confesses at the beginning of his recent book *Caring for Creation* (1994): "For most of my adult life I believed, as many environmentalists do, that religion was the primary cause of ecological crisis. That bias grew out of my reading of Lynn White's famous essay blaming Judeo-Christianity for the environmental crisis" (1–2). See also, for example, Derr (1975), Dubos (1973), Nash (1991) and Livingstone (1994).

[3] This was not the conclusion that White intended. He ended the article with a call for active concern from Christians, holding up St Francis as a model.

[4] There is a growing movement within Judaism that is not covered here. Two active Jewish groups are the Coalition on Jewish Life and the Environment and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. Additionally, these three models are not necessarily appropriate categories for the scholarly theological conversation that is now taking place.

[5] What little survey literature exists indicates a similar division in attitudes (Hand and Van Liere, 1984; Eckberg and Blocker, 1989). However, adherence to a particular theological position cannot be predicted based solely on denominational belonging, even among those actively concerned about the environment (Greeley, 1993).

[6] *The Egg*, the journal of the EEJ Working Group and the Eco-justice project of the Center for Religion, Ethics and Social Policy, functioned as a primary platform and resource. See also the document of the Presbyterian Eco-justice Task Force (1990), *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, as an example of eco-justice writings.

[7] This quote and the next one are taken from a transcript of National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, 30 January 1996. NPR issues a disclaimer that the transcript cannot "be guaranteed as to the accuracy of speakers' words".

[8] Ibid.

[9] The well-known evangelical theologian Francis Schaeffer was one of the earliest voices with his book, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*, published in 1970. He included Lynn White's essay as an appendix.

[10] See Lucas (1995) for a detailed portrait of the group that founded the ECF, the Holy Order of MANS, a new religious movement that converted to Eastern Orthodoxy. See Kearns (1994, 1995) for an account of the role of the ECF in Christian stewardship, and of how their Eastern Orthodoxy fits into the picture of evangelical environmentalism.

[11] See Kearns (1994, 1995) for a more detailed account of this split. See also Muratore (1988) and North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology (1988).

[12] The other partners are the National Council of Churches, the United States Catholic Conference and the Coalition on Jewish Life and the Environment.

[13] See the forthcoming Drew University dissertation of James Ball, "Evangelical Protestants and the Ecological Crisis", for an elaboration of this diversity. Ball divides evangelical eco-theology into four sub-strata—wise use, anthropocentric stewardship, caring management, and servanthood stewardship—of which three are genuinely pro-ecology, and one, the wise-use movement, masquerades as environ mentalism but is more appropriately seen as private property rights advocacy. See Cawley (1993) for more on the wise-use movement.

[14] Although the million dollar budget was attributed to EEN in news reports and in an article in Au Sable (1996), it is more accurate to state that it was the budget of the larger Endangered Species Act campaign of the Environmental Information Center, of which EEN was a part.

[15] Conversation with Ron Sider.

[16] *The Lehrer Report*, televised newscast, 3 June 1996.

[17] Ibid.

[18] As Peter Beyer (1994) points out, however, there are also inherent tensions between the call for economic equality and redistribution embodied in justice concerns and issues of consumption and scarce resources in environmental concerns.

[19] Finke and Stark (1992) challenge McLoughlin's reading of Great Awakenings, stating that these periods were not necessarily any more religious than others. I do not think their challenge undermines McLoughlin's discussion of cultural revitalization.

[20] These two responses, the traditionalist and new synthesis, correspond to Lynn White's call at the end of his essay. White concluded that "(m)ore science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or re-think our old one" (White, 1967: 1206). As I have suggested elsewhere (Kearns, 1995), these two responses are seen in Christian stewardship and creation spirituality.

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