

NO PAVING PARADISE TO PUT UP A PARKING LOT: AN
EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS RESOURCES ON
THE METHODS AND PRACTICES OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
CHURCHES' LIBERAL PROTESTANT ENVIRONMENTALISM

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Thesis for the Master's of Arts in Religion, Conflict, and Globalisation
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Groningen
4th of November 2021

Word Count: 19,608 words

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS¹

There are many people without whom this thesis would never have come to fruition. Firstly, I would like to thank my primary supervisor Professor Kocku von Stuckrad for all of his assistance and support throughout the research and writing process. I am eternally grateful to him for meeting my fretful and panicked emails and queries with so much kindness and patience, along with the many extremely helpful insights he provided me with. I would also like to thank Professor Evan Berry for agreeing to act as my secondary supervisor despite my not being a student of his and for the guiding light his work has acted as for this thesis.

In addition I would like to thank my incredible family and friends for supporting me throughout this process; to plumb the full depths of my gratitude here would be impossible but I hope this will go some way towards doing so. Thank you to my mother and father for eternally being there with love, tea, sympathy, and the resources I needed to keep going. Thank you to my sister Aileen for the unending stream of positivity and for always sharing in my triumphs, and thank you to her partner Mikey for all of his assistance in preparing for the defence of this thesis. To Claire, Jenny, Philip, Dearbhla, Becca, Claire, Fiona, Claudia, Ben, Dan, and so many more: none of this would have been possible without each and every one of you cheering me on, reading innumerable drafts, and offering your valuable opinions and insights. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Finally, I would like to thank Taylor Swift for producing four incredible albums as I attempted to complete this work and thereby ensuring that I retained some semblance of my sanity.

¹ Please note that acknowledgement is owed to the brilliant mind to whom credit for the title of this thesis can be given; thank you to Joni Mitchell for the incredible piece of song writing that is Big Yellow Taxi and the inspiration that its opening line (“They paved paradise and put up a parking lot...”) provided to me. (Mitchell, 1970)

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ABSTRACT

This paper engages with and provides support to claims in the field of religion and ecology concerning the great potential of religions to contribute positively to the fight against the environmental crisis. This is achieved using a case study of the liberal Protestant environmentalist efforts of the Eco-Justice Program and the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches in the United States from 2006 to the end of 2010 as demonstrated in documents produced to aid their members in celebrating and caring for creation. In particular, the paper examines the methods and practices constituting their liberal Protestant environmentalism as found within these documents and the impact of liberal protestant religious resources on those methods and practices. This is achieved with the aid of works by Evan Berry, Gary Gardner, and Laurel Kearns. In doing so, the paper demonstrates (where relevant) why the methods and practices of the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program and the Eco-Justice Working Group are so potentially beneficial to achieving environmentalist aims, as well as their potential adaptability for use in other forms of environmentalism.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

SURVEYING THE LANDSCAPE

As the field of religion and ecology has taken shape over the past thirty years, so has the art of writing an introduction to work in that field. Alongside the requisite information that an introduction ought to include, there will also often be a soft argument justifying religion's engagement with the environmental crisis.² This springs from a number of sources, one of which is the pervasive point of popular discourse that religion is in some way at odds with science.³ Acceptance of the reality of environmental issues, the causes and effects of which have received a great deal of attention from scientists, is frequently regarded as at odds with religion.⁴

In light of historical research on the dynamic between religion and science, historians widely accept that religion has at times stimulated and has at other times inhibited investigation of the natural world.⁵ Furthermore, there has been some empirical investigation of the relationship between religious identities and environmentalism and though results have been ambiguous and divergent⁶, there has been a rough consensus since the late 1990s that other factors (e.g. party affiliation, education, and region) weigh more heavily on the development of environmental sensibilities than religious identity.⁷ Despite this, the notion that religion stands in opposition to science and to its claims concerning the environmental crisis remains in the

² Examples include: (Koehrsen, 2018, P4) (Gardner, 2002, P7-12) (Gardner, 2006, P6-9) (Gottlieb, 2009a, P4-11) (Tucker, 2009, P1-5) (Hitzhusen and Tucker, 2013, P368-369) (Tucker and Grim, 2001, P1-4) (Jenkins and Chapple, 2011, P443)

³ (Numbers, 2007, P3-4) (Sideris, 2017, P10-11) (Evans and Feng, 2013, P596) (Gardner, 2002, P8) Real examples of such discourse are: *Faith vs. Fact: Why Science and Religion are Incompatible* (Coyne, 2015, P1-264); and: 'Richard Dawkins Celebrates Reason, Ridicules Faith' (Dawkins, 2012).

⁴ (Koehrsen, 2018, P4) (Evans and Feng, 2013, P596-597) (Jenkins et al., 2018, P87)

⁵ (Numbers, 2007, P4-5)

⁶ (Koehrsen, 2018, P6) (Kanagy and Willits, 1993, P676). Examples of such research: (Evans and Feng, 2013, P595-608) (Kanagy and Willits, 1993, P674-683) (Kamitsis and Francis, 2013, P136-143) (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, P159-174)

⁷ (Jenkins et al., 2018, P87) (Evans and Feng, 2013, P595-596)

popular imagination. Hence, it is unsurprising that many in the field of religion and ecology feel the need to justify their work in relation to the wider discourse.

These soft arguments usually look something like this: in light of the urgent need for humanity to change our lifestyles and societal systems⁸ we must expand the collective working to shift public conceptions and patterns of interaction with the natural world in a more sustainable and environmentally-conscious direction.⁹ This change requires a broader range of skills and resources than science alone possesses. Though no religion or religion alone is sufficient to cause this shift, the world's religious communities have much to offer such efforts.¹⁰ Religions are often deeply influential in forming adherents' conceptions of nature and possess moral imperatives and value systems which could act as resources for encouraging such shifts, as well as possessing the moral authority needed to make them persuasive and motivating.¹¹

Furthermore, religion has at many points been an important player in spurring (or hindering) social transformation¹²; for example, the religiously led and energized U.S. Civil-Rights movement, the liberation theology backed Nicaraguan revolution, and the Shi'ite-inspired Iranian Revolution.¹³ These claims are included to prove the power religions possess for social transformation, a power that researchers could usefully contribute to the environmentalist movement. This component of the arguments is interesting as religion and ecology scholars continually utilise the power of religion for environmental activism to ground work in the field despite there having been a mere handful of papers focusing on religious environmentalism.

'Environmentalism' refers to activities and ideologies the objective of which is sustaining, conserving, and (in some cases) bettering specific and multiple values of the environment in the face of increasing pressures on it, whilst also sustaining the supply of resources for people from it.¹⁴ 'Religious environmentalism' (RE) is a subset where the activities, ideologies, concepts, etc., utilised are expressions of particular religions often in ecumenical alliances with other religions and/or with non-religious actors.¹⁵ There has been no shortage of real action taken by religious actors (conservative, moderate, and progressive alike) to 'green'¹⁶ their religions¹⁷, as can be seen even from the small pool of works discussing RE; examples include the final five chapters of *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*¹⁸, the seventh section

⁸ Similar point in: (McFague, 2001, P125)

⁹ (Hitzhusen and Tucker, 2013, P368-369)

¹⁰ (Hitzhusen and Tucker, 2013, P368-369 and 373-374) (Gardner, 2002, P8)

¹¹ (Hitzhusen and Tucker, 2013, P368 and 374) (Gardner, 2002, P8)

¹² (Koehrsen, 2018, P4) (Gardner, 2002, P12) (Gardner, 2006, P9) (Gottlieb, 2009a, P7) (Tucker, 2009, P3-4) (Hitzhusen and Tucker, 2013, P369) (Tucker and Grim, 2001, P3-4) (McDuff, 2010, P5) (Tucker and Grim, 2016, P7) (Wardekker, Petersen, and van der Sluijs, 2009, P513) (Engel, 1997, P14-15)

¹³ (Koehrsen, 2018, P4) (Gardner, 2002, P12)

¹⁴ (Kimmins, 1993, P286-287)

¹⁵ Conception draws on: (Gottlieb, 2009b, P3)

¹⁶ The 'greening' of religion is a process whereby religious traditions are becoming more environmentally friendly. (Koehrsen, 2018, P6) (Taylor, 2010, P10)

¹⁷ (Jenkins and Chapple, 2011, P444)

¹⁸ (Gottlieb, 2009b, P1-43) (Lorentzen and Salvador, 2009, P1-24) (Daneel, 2009, P1-32) (DeWitt, 2009, P1-21) (Taylor, 2009, P1-25)

of the edited volume *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*¹⁹, and Mallory McDuff's book *Natural Saints*²⁰.

Such works don't go much beyond describing instances of RE, discussing how those efforts relate to the wider environmentalist movement and other socio-political issues, and they occasionally reference traditional resource utilisation in RE.²¹ This is necessary and important work; it aids us in understanding the development and shape of religious environmentalism, its relationship to non-religious forms of environmentalism and the wider world, and how it has aided the achievement of environmentalist aims. However, as the analysis stops at the level of description the picture that we have of forms of RE and how they operate is left lacking generality.

Though we have descriptions of individual cases of RE from which to draw conclusions about the kinds of actions performed and the ideologies utilised, we lack an understanding of how particular traditions and their actors tend to perform environmentalist action, what traditional resources are used, etc. Our analyses lack generality as we only have unconnected knowledge of particular cases rather than of the patterns and relationships between those cases, as well as between action types, their contexts, and their actors' traditions. This also inhibits further research to determine what action types and ideological points seem to be common across traditions. This is unfortunate as it prohibits more nuanced academic understanding and it means that our understanding of how religions can and are contributing to fighting the environmental crisis is somewhat cut off at the knees. Given that a major basis for the field of religion and ecology is the potential for religion to contribute to this fight, a failure to better understand how religions are contributing to this fight seems to be a failure to meet the field's foundational aims.

What is needed are theoretical systematizations of the methods and practices (here understood as those actions and procedures for action used to conduct the kinds of activities and ideologies constituting environmentalism) of religious environmentalist actors from various traditions. This will enable understanding of the general patterns of the efforts of actors from different traditions to sustain, conserve, and (in some cases) better specific and multiple values of the environment in the face of the environmental crisis and how they are thereby living the claim that religions have much to contribute to the fight against the environmental crisis. I will focus on the methods and practices of the liberal Protestant environmentalism of the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program and Eco-Justice Working Group²² for the period 2006-2010 as a case study of liberal Protestant environmentalism in the U.S.²³ Though I will here focus on systematizing the methods and practices of the EJPWG's liberal Protestant

¹⁹ (Gottlieb, 2006, P501-662)

²⁰ (McDuff, 2010, P3-200)

²¹ Texts featuring examples of RE which fulfil my analysis of trends concerning analytical engagement with RE are: (Eaton, 2021) (Wardekker, Petersen, and van der Sluijs, 2009, P512-521) (Conradie, 2016, P70-78) (Tucker and Grim, 2016, P3-12) (Jenkins and Chapple, 2011, P441-463) (Grim and Tucker, 2001, P10-13) (Hitzhusen and Tucker, 2013, P368-376) (Jenkins et al., 2018, P85-108) (Gardner, 2002, P1-62) (Gardner, 2006, P1-209) (Koehrsen, 2018, P4-15)

²² Hereafter referred to as the 'EJPWG' (i.e., the Eco-Justice Program and Working Group).

²³ The reasoning for this selection is outlined in Chapters Two and Three.

environmentalism, I will also provide analysis of why these methods and practices are beneficial to achieving environmentalist aims and some preliminary insights into their potential usability/adaptability for non-liberal Protestant actors.

Furthermore, as Koehrsen has astutely noticed, there have been very few theoretical systematisations which describe the potential roles and resources that different religions can contribute to the transitioning of society to more sustainable systems.²⁴ Gardner has done work to identify the overarching assets that religions have at their disposal for helping to promote and enact more sustainable practices²⁵; though Gardner's work is invaluable in the insights it provides, his work only outlines five assets that religions *qua* religions can contribute, rather than examining what any particular tradition or denomination can contribute. Hence, it leaves a significant gap to be filled in terms of what particular resources²⁶ different traditions might contribute to efforts to fight the environmental crisis. As such, my research will include an examination of the impact of liberal Protestant resources on the methods and practices of the NCC Eco-Justice Program and Eco-Justice Working Group's liberal Protestant environmentalism.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This paper will comprise of seven chapters. Chapter Two will focus on determining what has been learned in the field of religion and ecology concerning the shape and methods of the 'greening' of Christianity as directed toward environmentalism, determining where further study is required, illustrating how I will engage with the field, and outlining an analytical framework for my analyses. It will also elucidate why I focus my study on liberal Protestant environmentalism in the United States. Chapter Three will offer an outline of the method (document analysis) that I used to generate and analyse the data with which I will answer my research questions, as well as my methodology. It will also outline the rationale behind my choice of case study and documents.

The discussions in Chapters Four, Five and Six will centre around three kinds of resource materials that the EJPWG produce for their member congregations, communions, and denominations to utilise in their engagements with environmental issues. Chapter Four will discuss educational resource materials, Chapter Five will focus on action resource materials, and Chapter Six will examine resource materials relating to worship practices and patterns. In each chapter I will highlight the core methods and practices that they utilise in that kind of resource material and how these methods and practices make use of liberal Protestant resources. In doing this, I will illustrate how and why some of these methods and practices are so useful for achieving environmentalist aims and any potential adaptability that I see for their use in other kinds of environmentalism. Connections will be drawn throughout to my analytical

²⁴ (Koehrsen, 2018, P7)

²⁵ (Gardner, 2006, P43-53) These five assets will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

²⁶ 'Resources' here refers to the religious practices, sacred texts, narratives, rituals, ideologies, assets, etc., that religious environmentalist ideologies, actions, and procedures for action might draw on.

framework and I will discuss how my findings cohere with and/or further the findings of these works.

Chapter Seven will provide the conclusions that I have drawn in relation to my two core research questions: (i) what are the methods and practices of the liberal Protestant environmentalism of the EJPWG for the period 2006-2010? and; (ii) what is the impact of liberal Protestant resources on those methods and practices? Additionally, I will highlight any particularly pertinent areas for further research on the basis of my findings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

CHRISTIANITY, ENVIRONMENTALISM, AND THE UNITED STATES

Something that became clear to me early in my reading was the sheer breadth of work that has been written not just on Christian engagements with ecology and environmentalism, but on such engagements within the United States.²⁷ Jenkins, Berry, and Kreider offer as explanations for this the entanglement between predominantly Christian North Atlantic societies and the historical factors (i.e. the rise of fossil fuel industrialism) that caused the environmental crisis and the overrepresentation of Christianity within theology and religious studies such that there are more researchers with institutional support to consider the Christianity-environmental crisis nexus.²⁸

If this were a comprehensive explanation, we would see a roughly even amount of work written from or within a European Christian context, but “...European theology has devoted less attention to these questions.”²⁹ Evan Berry’s book *Devoted to Nature* (2015) offered me insight into why the environmentalist movement first developed in the United States and why it has been fruitful ground for environmentalism. Berry argues that there’s a “historically demonstrable genealogical affinity” between the American environmentalist movement and the Christian theological tradition.³⁰ This theological influence provided vocabularies and conceptions of humans, nature, and their relationships which enabled an emergent environmental imagination to branch out in novel ways in the American context.³¹ The mountains and wilderness that abounded there came to be seen in the later 1800s, thanks to belief in the soteriological benefits of time in nature drawn from romanticism’s Christian base, as necessary for reinvigorating in urban Americans the American virtues of individualism,

²⁷ (Gottlieb, 2009a, P1-18) (Gottlieb, 2009b, P1-43) (Hart, 2009, P1-26) (Santmire and Cobb, 2009, P1-43) (Evans and Feng, 2013, P595-608) (Jenkins et al., 2018, P85-108) (Tucker, 2009, P1-21) (Taylor, 2009, P1-25)

²⁸ (Jenkins et al., 2018, P90)

²⁹ (Santmire and Cobb, 2009, P24)

³⁰ (Berry, 2015, P2)

³¹ Ibid. P13

honesty, perseverance, and the nobility and brutality of the pioneer.³² These virtues were supposedly at risk in urban Americans due to their proximity to civilisation and its attendant ills.³³ Given the necessity of wilderness for the betterment of Americans and their society, their protection became extremely important.³⁴ Over time these theological themes and ideas became more obscured by more tangible political concerns and scientific interests in the environmentalist movement.³⁵

Berry's argument differs from others as he does not believe that the romantic shift in nature perceptions in the United States from fear to appreciation³⁶ was only able to occur once the influence of Christianity and the traditional Western philosophical, literary, and theological traditions had dissipated.³⁷ He holds that these new sensibilities critical to the rise of American environmentalism were actually born of, produced in response to, and perpetually indebted to Christian thought.³⁸

Properly assessing Berry's work is well beyond the scope or remit of this paper. Therefore, I take the validity of Berry's thesis as an assumption grounding my work. However, I feel confident in this decision due to the care, precision, and scholarly rigour with which Berry builds his case. Not only does he directly engage with the works of other major writers on this topic (e.g., Marjorie Hope Nicolson) and carefully combat their arguments, but he does so using many of the same sources and historical eras that they reference and takes great care to illustrate why he feels his interpretation of them is as strong as theirs or stronger.³⁹ Furthermore, the sheer breadth of examples of Christian services, themes, psalms, and the like that he finds in the early engagements of American recreationalist clubs seems to offer strong support to his thesis.⁴⁰ Additionally, the numerous reviews of Berry's work are on the whole positive; Berry's argumentation is described as "deft"⁴¹, "nuanced"⁴², "convincing"⁴³ and as providing "valuable insights"⁴⁴ if not being without its issues.

The strongest and most prevalent criticism of Berry's work relates to the scope of its claims about the roots of 'American' environmentalism compared with the contextual scope of his primary data. The recreationalist group engagements that provide much of the primary data for his claims are limited to the interwar years and to the Pacific Northwest, yet Berry makes claims

³² Ibid, P32-37, 65, 71, 102, and 131

³³ Ibid. P128

³⁴ Ibid. P65 and 71

³⁵ Ibid. P173

³⁶ See (Taylor, 2009, P4) for a reference to the standard, opposite view.

³⁷ (Berry, 2015, P27) There's a similar assessment in: (Pritchett, 2016, P127)

³⁸ (Berry, 2015, P27)

³⁹ See (Berry, 2015, P104-120) for his engagements with the arguments and evidence found in Nicolson's book *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (1963). Similar themes and cultural examples are discussed in Berry's book and Roderick Frazier Nash's book *Wilderness and the American Mind*, such as Rousseau, Augustine, pioneer mentality, and Petrarch. (Nash, 2014, P19-20, 49, 145) (Berry, 2015, P29, 33, 35, and 131)

⁴⁰ Sample discussions can be found at: (Berry, 2015, P89, 91-92, 94, 98, and 156)

⁴¹ (Lowe, 2016, P263)

⁴² (Swanson, 2019, P117)

⁴³ (Pogue, 2017, P259)

⁴⁴ (Sideris, 2017, P108)

about liberal Protestants and the impact of their beliefs and actions on the development of environmentalism nationwide.⁴⁵ Though this criticism is valid in the claims it makes about the scope of Berry's conclusions as compared with the scope of his primary data sources, I (like some of Berry's critics) hold that Berry's work still offers important primary data and analysis to the ongoing examination of the relationship between religious attitudes and environmentalist behaviour.⁴⁶ Hence, this criticism's validity is insufficient to render Berry's arguments and insights an entirely unsuitable basis for my own work, though it is sufficient to make me conscious of the fact that Berry's work can only provide part of the story concerning the development of the environmentalist movement and thus my findings will at most mirror part of the early environmentalist movement.

My research builds upon Berry's by examining how some of the traditions which were formative in shaping environmentalism in (sections of) the American context have in contemporary times directed their resources towards environmentalism. However, it also benefits from the knowledge I have from his work concerning the shape of environmentalism in that context. This enables me to better understand why CE in that context might use some of the methods and practices that it uses, and my research furthers Berry's by highlighting any link between contemporary CE and his arguments concerning the early environmentalist movement.

Berry is not particularly specific as to which Christian traditions influenced the early American environmentalist movement and how they did so; however, the book focuses predominantly on the contributions of white American liberal Protestantism as he argues that the core logic of the environmentalist movement was deeply wrapped up with the cultural commitments of this group.⁴⁷ My work is intended build on Berry's research so I too direct my research toward the environmentalist actions of liberal Protestants. Liberal Protestantism as I conceive of it includes Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Methodists, Anglicans, and members of the United Church.⁴⁸ I focus on this strain of American Protestantism as I believe that these denominations are the best contemporary match for Berry's subject. My inclusion of groups such as Presbyterians and Congregationalists also ties in with Mark Stoll's work on the roots of American environmentalism, though I will not draw on his work.⁴⁹

I will not, however, solely focus on *white* liberal Protestants. Though I understand Berry's reasoning for focusing on this intersection, I aim for my work to challenge the almost universal centering of white Americans of European descent and the experiential frameworks with which they operate as the subjects of studies of religious environmentalism in the United States.⁵⁰ I do this because "who gets to have a voice in sustainability matters".⁵¹ As my study is directed

⁴⁵ (Stoll, 2016, P791) (Witt, 2017, P105)

⁴⁶ (Witt, 2017, P105)

⁴⁷ (Berry, 2015, P19)

⁴⁸ Conception draws on: (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, P161)

⁴⁹ (Stoll, 2015, P1-276)

⁵⁰ (Baugh, 2020, P833)

⁵¹ (Sideris, 2015, P369) Italics have been removed original text.

toward an understanding of the way LPE in the US operates and attempts to offer solution(s) to the environmental crisis, it is necessary that I take account of the variety of manners in which LPE can occur in virtue of the variety of racial perspectives one might occupy in America.

Hence, I will attempt to continually and consciously decolonize my approach. Doing this involves actively decolonizing my analytical framework, as well as the activism, issues, and ideologies that I consider in generating my data. As my own racial identity prohibits me from engaging in first person occupation of the ‘frames of reference’⁵² of Black people, Indigenous people, and people of colour (BIPOC), I will operationalize conceptions and theories produced by, centring, and/or cohering with BIPOC perspectives and engagements in religious environmentalism. Furthermore, I will continually reflect on my own positioning and will compare and contrast my own natural inclinations with those that I come to when I (as best I can) critically analyse from the perspectives offered by my BIPOC-centering analytical framework.

THE FIELD OF RELIGION AND ECOLOGY, CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTALISM, AND ME

An important factor in the rise of Christian environmentalism was Lynn White’s (in)famous paper *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis* (1967). White lays the majority of the culpability for the environmental crisis at the feet of Western Christianity.⁵³ White argued that uniquely Christian notions of the human-nature relationship entrenched into Western culture beliefs about the right of man, created in God’s image, to assert dominance over a nature created to serve them.⁵⁴ This understanding of the man-nature relationship combined with the development in the 13th century West of an understanding of natural theology as a way to understand God’s mind resulted in a formative union of Christianity and Western science and technology.⁵⁵ White believes that due to the basis of modern science and technology in Christian natural theology, along with their being predominantly occidental⁵⁶ and voluntarist⁵⁷ realizations of the Christian understanding of humanity’s rightful dominance over nature, modern science and technology have given humanity powers with devastating and out-of-control ecological effects.⁵⁸

White was not the first scholar to argue in this manner⁵⁹; Ludwig Klages argued in his speech ‘The Human Being and the Earth’ (1913) that humans around the world had waged a ‘war of annihilation’ against countless animal species which were not useful to humans and that they used religion and ‘civilisation’ as their means.⁶⁰ He additionally argued that such destruction

⁵² (Crenshaw, 2016, P3:30-4:00)

⁵³ (White, 2006, P179) Phrasing draws on: (McFague, 2001, P125)

⁵⁴ (White, 2006, P177)

⁵⁵ Ibid. P178-179

⁵⁶ Ibid. P175-176

⁵⁷ Ibid. P178

⁵⁸ Ibid. P179)

⁵⁹ Aldo Leopold also blamed Western religion for aspects of the ecological crisis. See (Taylor, 2010, P32)

⁶⁰ (Stuckrad, Forthcoming, P59 and 60)

had been wrought against ‘old-growth forests’ that they had become a ‘pious fable’ and were approaching their total end.⁶¹ Klages holds that the cause of this destruction falls *exclusively* upon Christian people whose culture ‘heaped invention upon invention’, enabled the flourishing of numerical science, and which stirred an urge for expansion which led to the subjugation of non-Christian races and the economic exploitation of nature.⁶²

Despite the importance of paying greater attention to other theses like White’s and to alternate beginnings for narratives articulating the religion-ecology relationship⁶³, White’s paper “prompted a vast, diverse, and ongoing scholarly response”⁶⁴, akin to that of only a small number of works in other disciplines (like Edmund Gettier’s ‘Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?’).⁶⁵ White’s paper is treated as something of a jumping-off point for innumerable academic endeavours and for the creation of a few sub-disciplines (e.g. environmental philosophy, eco-theology, and the environmental humanities).⁶⁶

The reaction of many in the field of religion and ecology coheres with White’s view that as the roots of our environmental crisis lie with religion, religions must play a part in remedying them.⁶⁷ Of the responses to White there are two broad kinds that are most relevant here: (i) empirical studies testing the validity of White’s thesis⁶⁸ and; (ii) ‘eco-theological’ responses and green Christianity. I will not examine such empirical studies as they will not further my study’s aims greatly; for my interest lies not in the validity of ‘The Lynn White Thesis’⁶⁹, but in the movement it helped to create within Christianity and what has been ascertained about this movement. I will instead examine eco-theological responses and the rise of green Christianity, as well as the findings of academic studies of such matters.

Eco-theology is a confessional mode of ecological engagement that critiques the Christian tradition from an ecological standpoint and offers a Christian criticism of environmental destruction and mistreatment.⁷⁰ Eco-theology also generates comprehensive reforms and proposals for the creative and constructive transformation of Christianity’s dynamic with nature.⁷¹ Eco-theology encompasses two of four forms of Christian responses to White: (i) apologetic responses which argue that a given tradition is environmentally sensitive when understood properly and (ii) confessional responses which (at least in part) acknowledge guilt and which result in internal religious reform to make their tradition environmentally responsible.⁷²

⁶¹ (Stuckrad, Forthcoming, P60)

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ (Stuckrad, Forthcoming, P60-61) (Bauman, 2017, P166 and 169)

⁶⁴ (LeVasseur and Peterson, 2017, P4)

⁶⁵ (Gettier, 1963, P121-123)

⁶⁶ (LeVasseur and Peterson, 2017, P1-2 and 4)

⁶⁷ (White, 2006, P181) For discussion of this see: (Taylor, 2010, P10-12)

⁶⁸ For example: (Evans and Feng, 2013, P595-608) (Kanagy and Willits, 1993, P674-683) (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, P159-174).

⁶⁹ (Whitney, 2017, P19-20)

⁷⁰ (Conradie, 2016, P70) (Jenkins et al, 2018, P92) (Eaton, 2021)

⁷¹ (Conradie, 2016, P70) (Jenkins et al, 2018, P92) (Eaton, 2021)

⁷² (Taylor, 2010, P11-12)

This turn towards active engagement with the relationship between the Christian tradition, its denominations, and the natural world is commonly found in theological studies, seminaries, workshops, conferences, and parishes, i.e., across the domains of Christian life.⁷³ A given eco-theology can emphasise theological or ecological aspects but the goal of uniting the Christian tradition with nature, the promotion of beneficial human-earth relations, and enabling resistance to environmental decline is what unites all eco-theologies.⁷⁴

Eaton, Tucker, and Grim categorised the eco-theological efforts of Christianity and other traditions to engage with ecological problems into three methodologies: interpretive retrieval, interpretive reevaluation, and interpretive reconstruction.⁷⁵ In interpretive retrieval scriptural, cosmological, and legal sources are examined to determine the nature of traditional religious teachings concerning human-earth relations.⁷⁶ The processes of historical and textual studies utilised need to identify latent resources within the tradition concerning human-earth relations.⁷⁷ Interpretive retrieval can also take the form of work that seeks to identify ethical codes and ritual customs to illuminate how that tradition's teachings were then put into practice.⁷⁸ The Earth Bible Project (an ecological hermeneutic project that interpreted the Bible from the Earth community's perspective) is an example of interpretive retrieval.⁷⁹

Interpretive reevaluation evaluates a tradition's teaching in regard to their relevance to contemporary circumstances and issues.⁸⁰ Such projects ask if and which Christian ideas/teachings/ethics can be utilised by contemporary practitioners who hope to shape more ecologically sensitive attitudes and sustainable practices.⁸¹ This questioning may also engage with if and how particular ideas, teachings, ethics, etc., may have led to damaging or unsustainable environmental practices.⁸² An example of interpretive reevaluation might be White's paper.⁸³

Interpretive reconstruction suggests novel and creative ways that traditions can adapt their teachings, ideas, ethics, rituals, practices, etc., to better respond to contemporary circumstances.⁸⁴ This method of interpretation causes novel syntheses or modifications of traditional ideas and practices for modern modes of expression.⁸⁵ Examples of interpretive reconstruction would include the reimagining of pilgrimage by the North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light religious environmental organisation to include visitation of mountaintop

⁷³ (Eaton, 2021)

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ (Tucker and Grim, 2001, P16) (Eaton, 2021),

⁷⁶ (Tucker and Grim, 2001, P16)

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ (Habel, March 2021)

⁸⁰ (Tucker and Grim, 2001, P17) Eaton refers to this as interpretive 'reinterpretation'. (Eaton, 2021)

⁸¹ (Tucker and Grim, 2001, P17)

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ (White, 2006, P179)

⁸⁴ (Tucker and Grim, 2001, P17)

⁸⁵ Ibid.

mining sites and communities, where visitation is supposed to cause visitors to reflect, pray, and act to prevent further degradation.⁸⁶

This systematization of eco-theological methodologies is a useful analytical tool as it enables understanding of the eco-theological interpretive processes behind some piece of environmentalist activity/ideology and enables one to categorise these activities/ideologies according to their underlying interpretive processes. However, such a systematization tells us very little about the actual content of the interpretive work, nor does it tell us how particular Christian teachings, ideas, ethics, etc., are likely utilised in that eco-theological work and thus how the CE arising from it will look. Something more is needed if I am to understand the influence of the Christian tradition on the methods and practices of CE and hence, this is not the right analytical tool for my project.

Laurel Kearns proposes three ‘models’ or ‘ethics’ of Christian eco-theology in the United States: (i) ‘Christian Stewardship’; (ii) ‘Eco-Justice’ and; (iii) ‘Creation Spirituality’.⁸⁷ On the Christian stewardship model, the Genesis commandment (1:26-28)⁸⁸ that gives humans dominion over the Earth is reinterpreted as a divine mandate to be good stewards of and care for all of creation.⁸⁹ Proponents of Christian stewardship hold that the environmental crisis arises from human sinfulness, from the sin of not living properly (i.e., in accordance with Christian values and the like).⁹⁰ ‘Creation Spirituality’ focuses on reorienting humans to understand themselves as part of a larger, panentheistic creation; a position from which humans will recognise the need to preserve the whole of creation.⁹¹ Both Christian stewardship and creation spirituality have a homocentric perspective on the changes necessary to confront the environmental crisis, i.e., both feel that the combined effects of changing individuals’ ideas about the human-creation relationship will save the Earth.⁹²

The ‘Eco-Justice’ model focuses on linking particular environmental concerns with justice positions already found in the church⁹³, where the basis for the environmental crisis is the injustice found in the world.⁹⁴ It focuses in particular on the impact of environmental degradation on the impoverished and BIPOC.⁹⁵ On this model, standing in right relationship to one another is one part of being in right relationship to the world as a whole⁹⁶ and it emphasises actualizing the Kingdom of God, where the true embodiment of Christian community and

⁸⁶ (McDuff, 2010, P125-126)

⁸⁷ (Kearns, 1996, P55-56)

⁸⁸ (King James Bible, 1987, Genesis 1:26-28)

⁸⁹ (Kearns, 1996, P58)

⁹⁰ Ibid. P58-59

⁹¹ Ibid. P57

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid. P56

⁹⁵ (Kearns, 1996, P57) The focus of the eco-justice model on the effects of environmental degradation on the subjugated within society is understandable due to the importance of such factors in the U.S. context but also due to the importance of environmental justice and racism in the development of CE in the United States. For a discussion see: (Gottlieb, 2009b, P23 and 24)

⁹⁶ (Kearns, 1996, P64)

correct praxis are needed to solve our environmental issues.⁹⁷ The eco-justice model has a socio-centric and distinctly political approach to solving the environmental crisis; positing the importance of structural and institutional change to solve the current (and any future) environmental crisis.⁹⁸

These models bear an interesting connection to the work of Carol Wayne White. In *Black Lives and Sacred Humanity Toward an African American Religious Naturalism* (2016), Wayne White examines African American religiosity, specifically the theme of liberation endemic to it, through a naturalistic approach to demonstrate the ingenuity of the ways that Black Americans have relentlessly endeavoured to claim their full humanity and create a meaningful, dignified existence for themselves (i.e., to humanise themselves against a culture which has previously and continues to dehumanise them).⁹⁹ Wayne White posits the concept of *sacred* humanity. ‘Sacred humanity’ presupposes that all humans are biotic forms that emerge from evolutionary processes, that they share a deep homology with other sentient beings, and that they value this connection.¹⁰⁰ Due to the relatedness and interconnectedness this presupposes between humans and all other sentient beings, it can be used to challenge the constructions of ‘isms’ that are rooted in alienating and problematic self/other differentiations, such as racially constructed differentiations or the civilisation/nature differentiation.¹⁰¹ In light of this interconnectivity and the resulting capacity to impact upon one another and other natural processes, humans have a moral duty to act in a manner that promotes the flourishing of all life (be it human or non-human, black or white, etc.) and to encourage other humans to do the same.¹⁰²

This concept clearly bears similarity to the eco-justice model in its conception that there is an inextricable connection between one’s relationship to other humans and one’s relationship to all other life forms, and thus in its conceptions of the relationship between one’s treatment of other humans and one’s treatment/effects on the natural world.¹⁰³ Furthermore, it prescribes the recognition and implementation of a set of correct social relationships (i.e., right relation) based on the interconnectedness of the whole global community and views correct praxis (which promotes the conditions for the flourishing of all life) as the manner to correct socio-political and environmental injustices.¹⁰⁴ In addition, the call to encourage others to recognise the interconnectedness of all life and to promote its flourishing mirrors the importance placed upon advocacy in the eco-justice model.¹⁰⁵

Wayne White’s understanding of African American religiosity, its conception of humanity, and of the relationship between humans and the non-human natural world also mirrors conceptions

⁹⁷ Ibid. P57-58, and 64

⁹⁸ Ibid. P57 and 64

⁹⁹ (Wayne White, 2016, P3 and 16) (Wayne White, 2017, P112)

¹⁰⁰ (Wayne White, 2016, P34)

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid. P35 and 125-126

¹⁰³ (Kearns, 1996, P64)

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. P57-58 and 64)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. P57 and 64)

found in the creation spirituality model. Humans are posited as ‘nature made aware of itself’ by Wayne White¹⁰⁶ and creation spirituality advocates hold that though the whole universe exhibits a psychic-physical character, in humans it has developed into a capacity for complex forms of self-consciousness.¹⁰⁷ There are also similarities in their conceptions of humans as but one part of the universe, united by their common origins and their shared part in the processes and occurrences of the universe.¹⁰⁸

That there are such similarities between a form of religiosity that developed to promote the liberation of the racially subjugated and these two models seems to me good reason to think that these models would be useful tools for producing decolonized analyses. They would enable me to embody a more decolonized perspective as I analyse the ideologies, methods, and practices of environmentalism utilised by white and non-white, specifically Black, liberal Protestant actors. They would thereby enable me to draw conclusions which are better instantiated in the multiplicity of racial perspectives of the United States, and thus which are more insightful and representative of patterns, motivations, etc., of LPE in that context.

Earlier I critiqued Tucker, Grim, and Eaton’s systematization of eco-theological methodologies for failing to offer any substantial insight into the actual content and shape of eco-theological interpretive work and thus of CE. I also pointed out that it offers no insight as to how a given tradition’s own teachings, ethics, etc., shape the eco-theological work which is the basis for its environmentalism. Some of the core strengths of Kearns’ models are their abilities to address these failings. Kearns’ models provides strong foundations from which to draw preliminary conclusions as to the methods and practices of CE in the United States as she outlines what the root of the environmental crisis is under each model, the nature of the human-nature relationship under each model, the kinds of responses each model prescribes, the intellectual tools (i.e. the Bible, biology, etc.) each draws upon, and more.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, I can compare and contrast my data of LPE in the US against these models to begin to determine the impact of particular Christian resources on them.

I will make use of the Christian stewardship, creation spirituality, and eco-justice models as analytical tools for my project. However, I do not do so uncritically. According to Kearns, the eco-justice model is theologically mainline, creation spirituality’s adherents are often unchurched/theologically liberal, and Christian stewardship falls somewhere between theological conservatism and mainline Christianity.¹¹⁰ Kearns paper was researched between 1987 and 1992, a time when she admits that CE was “emerging”.¹¹¹ It thus seems reasonable that since this time more ‘models’ of CE might have developed as the movement gained momentum and that these models themselves might have developed such that they might no longer fall as strictly along the line dividing conservative, mainline, and liberal theology.

¹⁰⁶ (Wayne White, 2016, P28)

¹⁰⁷ (Sideris, 2017, P119) (Kearns, 1996, P61)

¹⁰⁸ (Wayne White, 2016, P28, and 34-35) (Kearns, 1996, P60-61)

¹⁰⁹ (Kearns, 1996, P56)

¹¹⁰ Ibid. P57 and 64)

¹¹¹ Ibid. P55)

Interestingly, in his study of the eco-justice movement from 1960-1995 as it is reflected in the literature, Engel finds that the eco-justice movement as a whole is written by liberal Christians.¹¹² This of course does not disprove Kearns' claims about the theological appeal of the models, but it does give us some cause to think that perhaps the Christians who direct themselves toward environmental topics and issues have a tendency toward more liberal forms of Christianity. I will use Kearns' models as analytical tools, but I will not automatically assume that incongruity between the theological appeal of a model and the denomination of the intended audience of a piece of LPE is due to some fault with my data or analyses.

Finally, Kearns' work does not discuss how Christian resources are utilised and why they seem to be utilised in particular manner in different cases. She does not discuss how the models' theological foundations and prescribed responses are commonly instantiated or how exactly they tend to use Christian practices, ideas, etc., to connect more closely with issues or in certain contexts. Kearns' work happens a level higher up the hierarchy of abstraction than my own will and so they are complementary but not competing.

THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS RESOURCES

In the only work engaging with the resources that religions can bring to environmentalist efforts that I could find, Gardner identifies what he holds are the five overarching assets that religions have at their disposal for helping to build sustainable societies.¹¹³ The five assets are: (i) they provide followers with a sense of meaning and purpose for their lives and actions;¹¹⁴ (ii) they yield great moral authority which they can project toward certain ends and inspire their followers with;¹¹⁵ (iii) the number of adherent they possess means that if even a fraction take their calls to action seriously they can have a great impact;¹¹⁶ (iv) they often possess significant financial and physical resources which they can bring to their environmentalist efforts and;¹¹⁷ (v) religions have a strong capacity to build social capital, i.e., the bonds of trust, communication, co-operation, and information dissemination that create the strong communities needed for communal action and problem-solving.¹¹⁸

Gardner builds a strong but simple case for the existence and usefulness of these assets, using a combination of simple logical and philosophical arguments backed up by case studies and statistics. I can ultimately find no strong reason to think that religions would not be able to contribute such assets to environmentalism, particularly given their similarity to some of the assets that Marc Gopin and Scott Appleby say that religions bring to peacebuilding¹¹⁹, as well as the aforementioned history of religion's role in social transformation.

¹¹² (Engel, 1997, P9)

¹¹³ (Gardner, 2006, P6 and 43) (Gardner, 2002, P5)

¹¹⁴ (Gardner, 2006, P43)

¹¹⁵ Ibid. P47 and 48

¹¹⁶ Ibid. P49

¹¹⁷ Ibid. P51

¹¹⁸ Ibid. P52 and 53

¹¹⁹ (Gopin, 2000, P20-23) (Appleby, 2000, P5-8)

Gardner demonstrates what assets religions can contribute to environmentalism due to their being religions and thus accruing certain moral and social powers. His work does not demonstrate how a particular religion in practice draws on their sacred texts, teachings, rituals, symbols, etc., Therefore, there is still work to be done examining how traditions draw on their resources in practice. Furthermore, Gardner does not examine how LPE puts into practice the assets it has as a religion and so my research into the impact of these assets on LPE methods and practices would build upon Gardner's work.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated how my work relates to and furthers work already done in religion and ecology. I have illustrated why I focus on the methods and practices of liberal Protestant environmentalism in the United States, as well as some of the work that has been done in Christian eco-theology and environmentalism to respond to Lynn White's accusations of blame. Finally, I highlighted how Kearns' and Gardner's' studies provide tools for analysing LPE methods and practices and the impact of denominational resources upon them.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH APPROACH AND CASE STUDY SELECTION

This chapter will outline the steps undertaken to answer my research questions, as well as offering the rationale behind the procedures that I utilised to select my data sources, and to generate and analyse my data.¹²⁰

My research is directed toward providing an in depth and contextualised understanding of certain social behaviours and beliefs and the processes utilised therein, as well as how certain other values, norms, stories, practices, etc., motivate and shape those beliefs, behaviours, and processes.¹²¹ The objectives of my study are such that they were best served by qualitative research methods, more specifically those belonging to the interpretive paradigm, and so this was the beginning of the methodological approach that I adopted. Moreover, my research seeks to understand in depth how certain activities and related ideologies (known as environmentalism) are conducted by a particular group (liberal Protestants) and thus seemed well-suited to the case study strategy of inquiry.¹²²

The case study that I selected was the environmentalism performed by the National Council of the Churches USA's Eco-Justice Program and Eco-Justice Working Group from the beginning of the year 2006 to the end of 2010. I selected this case study as the National Council of Churches has a history of engagement with environmentalist causes, advocacy, education, campaign creation, and more with national faith bodies, churches, and partner organisations (faith-based, interfaith, and para-church) across the United States that spans more than 30 years.¹²³ This case study, in virtue of the sheer breadth of the domains of social life and the number of manners through which the EJPWG has engaged in environmentalist action, as well as the length of time for which it has done so, was "information rich" and "illuminative".¹²⁴ Furthermore, of the 100,000 congregations unified within the NCC there is a strong and active contingent who belong to liberal Protestant denominations.¹²⁵ Thus it was a data source that

¹²⁰ (USC Libraries, 2021a)

¹²¹ (Hennink, et al., 2020, P11, 16, and 17)

¹²² (Creswell, 2003, P14 and 15)

¹²³ (CreationJustice.org, 2021a) (CreationJustice.org, 2021b) and (CreationJustice.org, 2021c)

¹²⁴ (USC Libraries, 2021b)

¹²⁵ (NationalCouncilofChurches.us, 2021)

led to observations which yielded thick descriptions and detailed insights into the phenomena at the heart of my study, goals which are at the core of the sampling process for valid qualitative research.¹²⁶ Moreover, the NCC is widely held by those working within the field of religion and ecology to be an important figure and leader in CE and to have engaged in numerous valuable and successful alliances/coalitions with non-religious and other faith-based environmentalist organisations.¹²⁷ This meant that my research would offer valuable insights into the various methods and practices of a salient organisation in the field.

Finally, I aimed to decolonise my analytical framework and also the activism and issues I considered in generating the data of my study. The NCC's eco-justice focus shows recognition of the links between environmental injustices and the social justice issues of the Christian social justice framework (including anti-racism work and racial justice issues) and thereby shows work by the organisation to evidence their commitment to these justice issues across their activities.¹²⁸

I utilised the period from 2006-2010 as the religious environmentalism conducted by the NCC at this time aligns with an increase in the prominence of climate change and climate policy, often with moral and religious-ethical connotations, in the US political debate¹²⁹ and the US context more generally. In addition, I utilised this period in virtue of the variety of forms of environmentalist engagement that the EJPWG undertook during this period and the growth in the number of such engagements by them at this time. Throughout the 1990s they performed two or three noteworthy engagements each year, with this increasing to seven noteworthy engagements in 2003, eleven in 2004, and sixteen in 2005.¹³⁰ By 2007 this had risen to 25 noteworthy engagements.¹³¹ This period provided me with a wealth of data concerning liberal Protestant environmentalist methods and practices at a time when the movement was becoming increasingly prominent within the US context and this organisation.

GATHERING AND ANALYSING DATA

In determining how to gather and analyse the data for my study I was once again influenced by the directing of my research toward environmentalism. Environmentalism as a form of action has an intended audience, a purpose, and is performed by individuals or groups within a particular socio-historical context. Moreover, I was interested in understanding how such actions were suffused with the beliefs, practices, etc., of liberal Protestant actors and which denominational resources they were suffused with.

Documents are produced by individuals or groups within a socio-historic context who craft and direct said documents to particular ends and audiences.¹³² Moreover, documents are social products as they can and are used to shape the way that their intended audiences conduct themselves and are incorporated into social life and social action.¹³³ Analysis of documents

¹²⁶ (USC Libraries, 2021b)

¹²⁷ (Engel, 1997, P9-10) (Gottlieb, 2009b, P15 and 17) (Gardner, 2002, P7, 18, and 45) (Tucker, 2009, P6-7) (Hitzhusen and Tucker, 2009, P369-370 Table 1) (McDuff, 2010, P6)

¹²⁸ For where a commitment is made by the NCC to such justice issues see: (NationalCouncilofChurches.us, 2021)

¹²⁹ (Wardekker, et al., 2009, P512-513)

¹³⁰ (CreationJustice.org, 2021a)

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² (Davie and Whyte, 2011, P152-153)

¹³³ (Davie and Whyte, 2011, P153)

that encompasses not only what they say (i.e., the conception of reality that they present) and how they say it, but also who it is said by, who they are directed to, how they relate to other documents under study, and what their intended purpose is can provide detailed insights into the beliefs, practices, ethics, and worldviews of those who produce them, how they hope to impact society, and the manner through which they do so. Given the cohesion between the aims of my study and the nature of the insights that document analysis can provide, along with the wealth of publicly available documents created by the EJPWG for their environmentalist work from the relevant time period, I chose to collect and analyse my data through document analysis.¹³⁴

The coding and analysis of my data was a two-part process. The first step involved reading and analysing each document to ascertain when it was produced, who produced it (including, where possible, denominational affiliation), what environmental issue(s) it relates to, the intended audience, and what the document's socio-historical context is. This enabled me to determine not only if the document could be said to be the work of LPE, but also what its general purpose and formative context was. The second step involved analysing and coding the data thematically according to the forms of environmentalist action types used and propounded in the document. Concurrently, the documents were analysed and coded thematically according to the liberal Protestant resources that they drew upon. I cross-compared action types and their resources across documents to not only determine any potential relationships between the resources and the action types used and propounded, but between these thematic groupings and the formative context and purpose of documents.

The documents I examined were accessible online, some in the form of downloadable PDFs, others were old webpages that were accessible by way of a wayback machine. Some of these documents were directly accessible through the Creation Justice Ministries website and as such I was able to verify that they were unaltered originals quite easily. Where this was not possible, I took great care to ensure that they were unaltered originals to ensure the accuracy of my data and conclusions. When sourcing the documents I located them on a number of different websites, examined (where possible) when and by whom they had been published, and I cross-compared the different versions I found to determine which content was common to all and therefore, most likely to be original and unaltered.

CONCLUSION

I have outlined why I utilised qualitative methods belonging to the interpretive paradigm. I have illustrated why, in light of my research aims, I chose to use the EJPWG's environmentalist work from 2006-2010 as my case study. Finally, I discussed why and how I analysed their work using officially produced documents using the method of document analysis.

In the upcoming chapters I will discuss my findings concerning the methods and practices of the LPE of the EJPWG from 2006-2010 and what they demonstrate about the impact of liberal Protestant resources on same.

¹³⁴ The list of documents that I used (See: Appendix A) was sourced through the 'History' section of the Creation Justice Ministries website.

CHAPTER 4: EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE MATERIALS

INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYTICAL HEART OF THE PAPER

In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, we will examine the environmentalism that the EJPWG engage in and that they propound to their members. Each chapter focuses on a particular kind of resource material (educational, action, and worship resource materials) that the EJPWG produces to aid their members in celebrating and caring for creation.¹³⁵ These resource materials act as lenses for examination of particular methods and practices of their LPE contained therein, as well as their liberal Protestant resource use. This chapter will focus on educational resource materials, with Chapter Five focusing on action resource materials and Chapter Six examining worship-related resource materials.

Eleven of the twenty six documents that I analysed were produced using one template and for a similar purpose: each year the EJPWG produced resource materials to aid congregations and individuals in celebrating the created world as a part of their worship practices and to turn their attention to learning about and engaging with issues impacting creation.¹³⁶ The EJPWG produce three kinds of resource materials: educational, action, and worship resource materials. Educational resources focus on providing readers with information on ecological systems, the causes and effects of environmental issues, ways to combat environmental issues, and arguments for engagement with caring for creation. Action resource materials aim to provide readers with ideas and opportunities for action that they can undertake to care for the environment, along with guidance for how best to undertake such actions. Finally, worship-related resource materials offer guidance and ideas for operationalizing the worship context toward the celebration of and care for creation.

The documents are usually eight pages long and deal with one environmental issue (e.g. agricultural practices, wilderness preservation, biodiversity, etc.). Pages one and two typically provide an explanation of the document's core topic, as well as some kind of moral-theological argument based in scripture, ethics, etc., to encourage engagement with the issue. The third page outlines passages of scripture and reflections that can be used to construct a sermon

¹³⁵ (*Our Daily Bread*, 2007, P8)

¹³⁶ Ibid. This type of document is not the only type that constitutes a resource material but provides a good jumping-off point for my discussions.

directed toward an environmental creation-care. Page four discusses any remaining educational information required to understand the document's topic and outlines actions that individuals, households, and/or congregations can take in relation to that topic. The fifth and sixth pages contain a bulletin insert that congregations can use to incorporate environmentalism into their worship services. The seventh page offers guidance for educational activities that can be run with youth education groups, discussion/reflection questions and scripture passages for adult group study, and sources of further information about the topic of the document. The document's final page typically provides some kind of concluding link back to the core theological and environmental themes of the document. An in depth examination of these documents as examples of such resource materials will enable us to study a number of other methods and practices, along with their resource use.

I will also utilise a distinction that I noted between the two ways that the EJPWG draw on liberal Protestant resources; some of their methods and practices have not simply been suffused with liberal Protestant resources but are themselves operationalizations of such resources. Those methods/practices are not the result of synthesising liberal Protestant resources with more general environmentalist methods and practices, instead the resource itself *is* the method/practice. In the other case, the liberal Protestant resources have been synthesized with methods and practices that one might also be used in other forms of environmentalism/activism.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE MATERIALS

The Poverty of Global Climate Change is an excellent example of an educational resource material.¹³⁷ The document educates readers on the disproportionate impact of climate change on the impoverished. It explains that though climate change affects all humans, the brunt of its effects will be borne with the greatest difficulty by the impoverished as they “do not have the economic and technological resources to adapt to the expected impacts of climate change”.¹³⁸ The first two and a half pages of the document provide the necessary educational information needed to understand the causes of the issue, its effects, and why we ought to care about engaging with it.¹³⁹ The information provided in the document is morally motivating as it stimulates awareness that action must be taken using descriptions of the negative impacts of climate change and it can stimulate action as even its merely factual descriptions of issue and their effects will likely evoke the kind of emotional reactions which often motivate positive action in relation to issues.

However, this is not the only moral motivation provided in the document. Near the end of the first page the following moral-theological argument is provided:

Our call as people of faith - to protect the vulnerable and be stewards of God's Earth¹⁴⁰
- means we must act to stop global climate change. Because the effects of global climate

¹³⁷ Example of other kinds of documents that also constitute educational resources are: (*Environmental Racism*, 2006, P1-10) (*Made in the Image of God*, 2008, P1-2)

¹³⁸ (*The Poverty of Global Climate Change*, 2008, P2)

¹³⁹ Ibid. P1-3

¹⁴⁰ (New King James Version, 1982, Matthew 25:45) (New King James Version, 1982, Genesis 1:27-31 and Genesis 2:15)

change are already impacting those who can least afford to deal with it, addressing global climate change is also a justice issue.¹⁴¹

This datum is indicative of an operationalization of liberal Protestant resources that is seen throughout the documents as a mechanism for grounding and motivating engagement in creation care: utilisation of Christian teachings, ethics, narratives, etc., in moral-theological arguments aimed at justifying and motivating environmentalist action, where the resources *qua religious* resources provide moral authority¹⁴² and meaning¹⁴³ to the argument. In this case, a Christian identity (which entails the moral authority of certain ethical imperatives, in this case the call to care for the ‘least of these’ found in Matthew 25:45¹⁴⁴ and the stewardship ethos¹⁴⁵ found in Genesis) provides the moral justification and motivation for engagement with climate change. This datum coheres with two of Kearns’ models, the Christian stewardship model and the eco-justice model, and their relevant starting points for Christian engagement with environmentalism, the biblical stewardship ethos and pre-existing Christian social justice positions.¹⁴⁶

The exact shape of these moral-theological arguments and the resources utilised therein varies depending on the context and purpose for which they are employed, i.e., the document’s topic, the intended outcome of the argument, etc. In *Celebrating and Caring for God’s Creation* an argument is provided for living according to the stewardship ethos that begins with the belief that God is the creator of all things to demonstrate the interconnectedness of all things in creation and thus the fact that humans and the rest of creation cannot help but be affected by one another. It then uses a discussion of the cultural history of the Ancient Israelites as a nomadic people to elucidate that the same observations of numerous eco-systems that enabled them to see the unity in creation (i.e. God), also enabled them to develop “an ethos for living in healthy relationship with God, the Earth, and one another” in light of this interconnectedness.¹⁴⁷ This moral-theological argument uses Christian metaphysics concerning nature of the universe and relates it to a history of the development of Christian beliefs and ways of living to argue for a particular form of environmentalist action, i.e., stewardship.

The information provided in the documents is seen as necessary for the target audience’s understanding and thereby demonstrates who the document’s target audience is and what the goal of providing such information is, as well as providing a useful insight into how that information is tailored to its audience. The information provided in these documents is not aimed at widening the knowledge base of those already deeply educated on such matters and ensconced in environmentalist discourse. Instead, it aims to highlight an issue, explain why and how it is an issue, and illustrate why it is an issue we ought to engage with. This demonstrates that these documents are targeted toward those who can be and/or already are sympathetic to climate and environmental issues but who require more information on such matters to guide their engagement with and understanding of them.

¹⁴¹ (*The Poverty of Global Climate Change*, 2008, P1)

¹⁴² (Gardner, 2006, P43)

¹⁴³ Ibid. P47

¹⁴⁴ (New King James Version, 1982, Matthew 25:45)

¹⁴⁵ (New King James Version, 1982, Genesis 1:27-31 and 2:15)

¹⁴⁶ (Kearns, 1996, P56)

¹⁴⁷ (*Celebrating and Caring for God’s Creation*, 2009, P1-2)

Furthermore, their use of reports, statistics, descriptions, and predictions from the likes of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations Development Program shows an aim to provide informative and research grounded educational materials, which is important when you aim for your document to provide readers new to a topic with a solid and factually-based understanding of an issue. Finally, that they aim to provide readers with a thorough introduction to a topic is demonstrated by their highlighting how and where issues intersect, as well as their frequently highlighting other resources where readers can access more information on a topic.

What I find most interesting about the EJPWG's educational efforts is that the information is always presented in a deeply lucid and comprehensible manner that is not only intellectual engaging, but which is also morally and emotionally engaging. This emotional engagement can be seen in the factual but non-sterile way that they present some of the likely outcomes of global climate change, i.e., "... the expected toll on human society is staggering"¹⁴⁸ and "Addressing climate change must involve addressing the plight of those in poverty to be successful...".¹⁴⁹ The discussions are informative and clear, but they also do not make use of high-level jargon and difficult-to-follow reasoning. In fact, where such jargon or complex reasoning might need to be used they make a great effort to clarify matters as much as possible. For example, they take great care to elucidate the nature of the term 'environmental justice' whilst also highlighting the importance of drawing one's conception of it from multiple sources to ensure a richer understanding of it.¹⁵⁰

My analyses of these documents have provided a rich understanding of the educational information resources that the EJPWG creates: they provide well-researched, accessible, and non-scholarly introductions to a number of environmental issues and topics that are emotionally and morally engaging, as well as being action motivating. Before I conclude this chapter there are two more of their educational efforts that merit our attention: the guides that they create for educating young people and adults on environmental matters.

EDUCATING YOUTH GROUPS AND ADULT STUDY AND DISCUSSION GROUPS

In almost all of the aforementioned eleven documents¹⁵¹ there are sections outlining educational activities and offering discussion guides for Sunday schools and youth groups, as well as for adult study and discussion groups. The presence of these guides is unsurprising as many forms of liberal Protestantism have long traditions of such ministry¹⁵² groups and programs. However, these guides are interesting as they are not only a wonderful example of a method/practice that is an operationalization of a liberal Protestant ministry but because this operationalization, in particular the operationalization of adult study and discussion groups, might be their most innovative and important effort in terms of its potential wider usability.

In the case of the youth group/Sunday school activities, each guide typically outlines two or three educational activities which attempt to cause young people to reflect upon and discuss

¹⁴⁸ (*The Poverty of Global Climate Change*, 2008, P1)

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. P2

¹⁵⁰ (*Environmental Racism*, 2006, P3-4)

¹⁵¹ *Environmental Racism: An Ecumenical Study Guide* (2006, P11-13) also contains similar guides.

¹⁵² The purpose of ministry is "to create the right conditions for God to come to his people through his living Word". (Van der Borgh, 2008, P207)

the environmental/creation-based issue or topic at the centre of the document. Usually at least one of these activity suggestions will make use of a passage/passages from scripture, and in some cases it will make use of the scripture passages and the related discussion found in that document's 'sermon starter'. Let us briefly consider an example from the document *Our Daily Bread: Harvesters of Hope and Gardeners of Eden*. This document centres around the topic of the relationship between farming practices, farming policy, and the food system and their relationship to the well-being of creation.¹⁵³ There are three youth activity suggestions in the document but I will focus on 'Farm Web of Life', a game and discussion activity.¹⁵⁴

'Farm Web of Life' begins with a reading of Genesis 1:1-13, 20-22, 24-25, 27, 31a, after which the group leader is to discuss with the young people the various things God created, as well as how these things are reflected on a farm and their interdependence. After assigning each young person an aspect of creation, the young people are then to throw a ball of yarn across the circle to each other from one part of creation to another which is dependent upon or helps their aspect of creation. As they throw the ball of yarn on, they are to continue to hold onto a piece of the yarn. Once everyone is holding onto a piece of yarn, leaders should declare that some aspect of creation has been degraded and everyone representing the relevant aspect of creation has to drop their strings. Leaders are to use this to demonstrate and begin a discussion of the importance of all aspects of creation for the health of the whole and of the way in which farms represent this interconnectedness.¹⁵⁵

These activities take relatively simple actions and load them with reflection and discussion opportunities where the actions help demonstrate that which is being reflected on and discussed. Moreover, they provide an extremely necessary space and time for young people to reflect upon and discuss such issues, something which many in society might feel that we and our children *en masse* often lack.

There is also a kind of moral-theological education centring on reflection and discussion that can be found in the adult group study and discussion guides. In *At the Lord's Table: Everyday Thanksgiving* there are five discussion and reflection topics raised, two of which are accompanied by scripture suggestions that can be used to aid reflection and discussion.¹⁵⁶ Much like with the youth activities, these questions provide a starting point for moral engagement with issues and topics and illuminate how this engagement can cohere with and draw on one's faith whilst leaving room for individual thoughts and opinions. For example, the fourth reflection question reads:

Read John 6:53b-58. Does the bread lose an important characteristic of its sacramental power when grain production contributes to significant agricultural runoff and related 'dead zones' in coastal waterways? Does the wine lose an element of its sacramental essence when grapes are harvested by workers making significantly less than minimum wage?¹⁵⁷

Question four utilises aspects of scripture and related sacramental practices to question if we undermine the meaning of these sacraments if our practice of them undermines other beliefs

¹⁵³ (*Our Daily Bread*, 2007, P1)

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* P7

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ (*At the Lord's Table*, 2006, P4)

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

ensconced in scripture elsewhere (i.e., that God loves all of creation and we are called to protect it) due to the nature of our food production system. Whereas, question five focuses on how traditions institutionalise their ethical commitments to combat social-justice issues and enables participants to reflect on and discuss how they might take action relating to such matters.¹⁵⁸ In limiting the prescriptiveness of these questions the scope of the discussions and reflection that they spur is expanded whilst providing a framework for engagement in critical moral reasoning.

The provision of opportunities for reflection upon and discussion of moral-social issues, particularly for adults and particularly where a framework or starting point for such discussions is provided, is an extremely important action in the contemporary world. I make this claim in the context of popular discourse which has been around arguably since the rise of the capitalist-industrial system. The discourse says that in contemporary society many of us lack the time and skills necessary to engage in the kind of critical thinking needed to properly combat societal issues.¹⁵⁹ The pace of life and the work hours necessary to survive in the capitalist-industrial system leave many people with almost no time or mental energy to engage in critical reflection on such issues. This also limits the time that many parents and society elders have to engage young people in discussion of and reflection on such matters, thereby limiting their moral-social education to a degree. Moreover, due to the shift in society's values toward those of capitalism and consumerism, the kind of education many receive has been reformed to focus on producing the optimum worker to aid in maximizing profits for corporations. This has occurred at the expense of education in areas which are equally important for the good and richness of society and the lives of individuals (such as ethics, literature and art, aesthetics, etc.) but which result in less economically productive skills.

I make no claims as to the veracity of this discourse, I simply hold that if it is correct then the opportunities for reflection on and discussion of moral-social issues that the EJPWG resources provide might be an extremely useful tool. This tool has the potential to not only be useful for increasing liberal Protestant reflection upon and discussion of (and thus engagement with) such issues, but might also be adaptable for use in other kinds of environmentalism. These education, discussion, and reflection structures and guides, whether adapted and utilised privately or in wider community-based initiatives, would provide an amount of time each week or month in which users could focus on a guided foray into their own understanding of an issue/topic and related moral beliefs and actions. Not only would this be beneficial for the development of the individual's moral reasoning skills and their cognisance of societal issues, but when one has actively considered a matter and how one believes it ought to be handled the resulting moral imperatives become all the more morally motivating as their reasoning is more lucid and their necessity and correctness more viscerally understood. In essence, such engagements make it far harder to sit back and ignore issues and act in contradistinction to one's own values in relation to them. As a result, I believe that such structures have a strong chance of increasing engagement with social issues (environmental or non-environmental). Thus, I hold that they constitute an important and potentially extremely fruitful environmentalist method which could have a strong positive impact if used more widely.

CONCLUSION

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ For an example of this discourse see Bob Dylan's song 'No Time to Think', in particular (Dylan, 1978, 3:44-4:25)

This chapter provided illumination as to the structure of my analyses for Chapters Four through Six, as well as how this structure relates to the EJPWG's practice of resource creation. The chapter outlined the general nature of the primary educational materials that they provide in the documents under study, alongside an illustration of how they utilise liberal Protestant resources for moral-theological arguments aimed at educating readers on why they ought to engage with creation care. Subsequently, the chapter illustrated why the EJPWG's lay-person friendly approach is beneficial to the success of their educational efforts given their intended audience. Finally, there was a discussion of their operationalization of liberal Protestant youth and adult education systems toward environmental matters, which demonstrated why this is method is so potentially useful for motivating engagement with the environmental crisis.

CHAPTER 5: ACTION RESOURCE MATERIALS

EDU-ACTION RESOURCES

Though the methods and practices I will discuss in this chapter can be found in the eleven documents that I examined previously, I will expand the scope to examine documents beyond this format. This will widen the number of methods and practices that I encounter and highlight the broad number of ways that the EJPWG utilises liberal Protestant resources.

The action-directed resources that I studied fall into two very loose categories: (i) ‘edu-action resources’ and (ii) ‘action recommendation and opportunity resources’. The latter category is constituted of any action the EJPWG recommend to individuals, households, or congregations as a way to care for creation, or those actions which the EJPWG created opportunities for them to take. ‘Edu-action resources’ provide readers with educational information and how-to guides about certain environmentalist actions that they might want to undertake in order to combat a particular environmental issue or to engage with an aspect of creation care.

I will focus my discussions on ‘edu-action resources’. I have limited space for my discussions and the insights that can be gained from an examination of ‘action recommendation and opportunity resources’ will be limited to illustrating the great similarity between their methods/practices (e.g., political advocacy, lessening fossil fuel use, and lifestyle changes¹⁶⁰) and those common in the secular environmentalist movement. Furthermore, many of the ways that liberal Protestant resources are utilised in this type of action resource is simply by taking narratives, scripture, ethics, etc., and using them as a source of moral authority, meaning and purpose¹⁶¹ for the kinds of environmental action often found in secular environmentalism. Hence, I need not extensively discuss ‘action recommendations and opportunities’ to answer my research questions in an illuminative manner.

The document *Building a Firm Foundation: A Creation Friendly Building Guide for Churches* offers readers advice for “getting started using environmentally friendly and sustainable building practices... in a new building project, a renovation, or repairs.”¹⁶² Each of the document’s six chapters discuss a particular aspect of building construction, maintenance, and

¹⁶⁰ (*Mindful Living*, 2007, P11) (*Through the Eye of a Hurricane*, 2006, P4) (*Our Daily Bread*, 2007, P9-10)

¹⁶¹ (Gardner, 2006, P43-44 and 47)

¹⁶² (*Building a Firm Foundation*, 2006, P6)

renovation¹⁶³, alongside arguments for the ecological and theological importance of certain steps.¹⁶⁴ In chapter three, ‘Energy’, there are not only ecological and theological arguments for using energy in churches in a way that protects creation¹⁶⁵, but also specific advice in the areas of lighting, temperature regulation, ventilation systems, water heating systems, and green energy.¹⁶⁶ The document’s hyper-practical advice ranges in levels of difficulty, effort, and cost. For instance, “Use... compact fluorescent bulbs or tubular fluorescents”¹⁶⁷, “Turn off your hot water heater when it is not in use”¹⁶⁸, and “...solar energy can be an affordable, reliable source... of your energy needs”.¹⁶⁹ This advice is useful and accessible to people and churches with a range of skill levels and budgets. That the advice is genuinely practical and accessible to a variety of people means that it is more likely to be followed (to some degree at least) and it is more likely that readers will feel that they have the skills/budget necessary to realize the call to care for creation.

Such practical and grounded advice and actions are demonstrative of a wider theme in the EJPWG’s environmentalism: they aim to provide potential actions at a range of levels (i.e. individual actions, communal actions, societal changes, etc.) that feel achievable but also genuinely impactful. This is not dissimilar to the EJPWG’s previously discussed approach to educational efforts. This theme of practical and grounded advice and actions can also be seen in the document *Green Churches: Building Blocks*.

Green Churches: Building Blocks is an online resource detailing steps that churches can take to steward creation in relation to energy, transport, building and grounds maintenance, worship and Christian education, and waste reduction.¹⁷⁰ This document demonstrates how expansive the actions discussed in edu-action resource materials are; in the energy section there are step-by-step guides detailing how to read your energy-usage meter, fit compact fluorescent light-bulbs, appliance maintenance, and more.¹⁷¹ The transportation section has detailed guides on organising congregational carpools and running cycle-to-church events.¹⁷² The building and grounds section offers step-by-step instructions for starting a community garden, easy changes for more eco-friendly building maintenance, and a purchasing guide for environmentally-conscious custodial supplies.¹⁷³ Given the focus of this document on aiding congregations in *stewardship* of creation, this focus on providing practical and realistic environmentalist actions and advice for churches as a method for stewardship fits with the belief of proponents of the Christian stewardship model that churches should be “creation awareness centers”.¹⁷⁴

In light of the intended audiences for documents of this ilk, the information that they provide and the manner in which they provide it gives them the potential to be extremely fruitful environmentalist techniques. For they offer help to individuals and congregations who may wish to undertake certain actions to be more sustainable and environmentally-friendly but who

¹⁶³ Ibid. P3

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. P3 and 6

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. P14-15)

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. P15-23

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. P16

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. P21

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. P22

¹⁷⁰ (*Green Churches: Building Blocks*, 2010)

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ (Kearns, 1996, P60)

are unsure of what steps to take to do so and who, out of fear of making a mistake, will not do so. These resources provide opportunities for action by people who, when considered collectively and properly empowered, can undertake environmentalist efforts which can add up to produce real and significant effects. Typically, however, these individuals and groups are not given the support they need by mainstream secular/non-religious environmentalism to make impactful changes.

Moreover, many of the recommended actions in the EJPWG's edu-action resources also feature in prevalent scholarly literature discussing the best actions private actors can take against the environmental crisis. For example, the recommendations to add "...extra roof insulation..."¹⁷⁵ and "an air exchanger for ventilation and better energy exchange"¹⁷⁶ in *Bottom Line Ministries that Matter* cohere with recommendations made by Gardner and Stern in their short list of the most effective actions U.S. households can take to curb climate change.¹⁷⁷ The recommendation to swap to renewable energy sources¹⁷⁸ echoes Girod, van Vuuren, and Hertwich's claim that this is the only way to meet greenhouse gas emission intensity targets for shelter-related consumption and emissions.¹⁷⁹ That the advice in the EJPWG resources is consistent with some of the leading (contemporaneous and subsequent) research on best practices for private actors attempting to combat the environmental crisis means that the actions likely are truly impactful, even though they're largely achievable and accessible. This is particularly impressive when you consider the way that the secular environmentalist movement and its recommended actions often make lay people feel.

Oftentimes ordinary people will concur with professional activists that total system change and radical action are needed to solve the environmental crisis, but they will also be left feeling scared, disempowered, and unsure of how to help because they don't believe themselves to possess the skills or power necessary to effect such change. This feeling of disempowerment arouses feelings of indifference and dispassion, often meaning that people don't make changes in their lives and politics because they think they cannot be of real aid. Whereas, the accessibility and practicality of the EJPWG's advices empowers people to make tangible and impactful efforts and thereby renders them more likely to remain committed to the cause. Furthermore, when ordinary people engage with the environmental crisis and can see for themselves the positive effects that such actions can have, they will likely be encouraged to keep going with their efforts and to see how else they can have a positive environmental impact. Therefore, I would propose that it could be an extremely fruitful action for more environmentalists to produce edu-action documents like those that I have discussed here.

ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE'S WORLDVIEW AS A WHOLE

There is one more example of a kind of edu-action resource that I wish to examine as I believe it operationalizes liberal Protestant resources in a manner which demonstrates the importance of methods and practices of environmentalism which engage various components of the audience's worldview. *Blessing of the Animals* is a guide to hosting a service on St Francis' Day which recognises the ideals of St Francis of Assisi and where the blessings God provided

¹⁷⁵ (*Building a Firm Foundation*, 2006, P18-19)

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. P20

¹⁷⁷ (Gardner and Stern, 2008, P21)

¹⁷⁸ (*Building a Firm Foundation*, 2006, P8)

¹⁷⁹ (Girod and van Vuuren and Hertwich, 2014, P8-9) Also: (Wynes and Nicholas, 2017, P6)

for creation in the covenant he made after the Great Flood¹⁸⁰ are passed on to another generation of animals.¹⁸¹ Event guides like *Blessing of the Animals* offer guidance for the organisation and coordination of an event devoted to some aspect of caring for, learning about, and celebrating creation.¹⁸² The document not only details where the tradition comes from, who St Francis of Assisi was, and what his values were, but also provides a detailed agenda, a number of worship resources (e.g., prayers, sermon starters, and creature-oriented passages of scripture), a section detailing advice on logistical matters, and a number of sources of further information.¹⁸³

Such a service enables attendees to actively connect to an aspect of nature on a personal level and at the level of their faith. This personal connection to other parts of the natural world is important for aiding visceral, emotional understanding of the fact that environmental degradation/care impacts real creatures with emotions, desires, etc. This kind of connection to nature makes it harder to stand by as habits, eco-systems, and species are destroyed. Though connection to creation is a useful tactic, the service's cleverness goes beyond this. By inviting animals beloved by congregation members into a space they're normally excluded from (the worship space) and centring an important aspect of many congregation members' lives around them (their faith and weekly worship), the method operationalizes personal love and care for those animals alongside scripture and other religious resources detailing the love of God for them in an environment where attendees attempt to actively engage in their own moral-theological education. In this way, the attendees' own love for the animals, along with the worship environment, the beliefs of their faith, and many more of their worship practices (i.e., sermons, prayers, blessings, etc.), are utilised to strengthen the reality of certain environmental issues and the impact of moral requirements to care for creation on attendees. Thereby making attendees more likely to engage in real action steps relating to creation care.

This demonstrates the EJPWG's operationalization of liberal Protestant resources in contexts and manners where that specific resource enriches the action undertaken and carries it closer to achieving its aims. They do not merely load the actions they recommend with appealing theological themes, narratives, etc., for the sake of peaking liberal Protestant interest in such actions in the short term, for doing so will not likely create long-lasting and widespread engagement. Engagement will not be maintained if liberal Protestants feel that the connection between their faith, its beliefs, its practices, etc., exists only on a superficial level and if it cannot be realised beyond the level of isolated ideological grounding. This is why there is so much value to operationalizations of liberal Protestant resources where that specific resource not only enriches the action undertaken but where multiple components of their worldview is engaged, for they further enhance the entanglement of environmentalism into that religious worldview.

I make this claim because if we look at the nature of a worldview (religious or otherwise) and its related approach to life, each of its constituent beliefs, narratives, rituals, etc., are supposed to relate to and reinforce one another, creating an internally consistent and holistic worldview.¹⁸⁴ No matter how well the call to care for creation is tied to one particular narrative, ethical dictum, etc., if that call does not also relate to and mutually reinforce the rest of the

¹⁸⁰ (New King James Version, 1982, Genesis 9:8-10)

¹⁸¹ (*Blessing of the Animals*, 2008)

¹⁸² Another example of an event guide is *Cleanliness and Godliness: A Guide for Planning a Green Cleaning Fellowship Event* (2009, P1-11).

¹⁸³ (*Blessing of the Animals*, 2008)

¹⁸⁴ For a discussion of coherentist conceptions of epistemic justification see: (Olsson, 2021)

worldview, it can be easily dropped to maintain consistency overall. Whereas, if that call has been fully incorporated into the worldview and is deeply entangled with its numerous constituent parts, to rid oneself of it you must rework the entire system. Since this is a difficult and involved task if one wishes to retain coherency in the system, the incorporation of the call to care for creation is made all the more resilient. Hence, I believe that if the use of liberal Protestant resources in LPE reaches across the various dimensions of that tradition (i.e., rituals, narratives, etc.) and seems to be a fully encompassed part of that tradition then the call to care for creation is more likely to be sustained by participants over a long period of time as it becomes an important aspect of that faith.

If I am correct, methods/practices like the EJPWG's creation of environmentally directed ministry actions¹⁸⁵, worship services, and events are advantageous as they attempt to engage their members with their causes; for the liberal Protestant resources that these actions operationalize not only enrich the actions undertaken such that they will better achieve their aims but in operationalizing numerous kinds of resources alongside theological arguments, scripture, etc., they better entrench creation care within the system of their audience. This deeper entrenchment of creation care as morally necessary for liberal Protestants and as something which can mutually deepen their faith and be aided by faith actions means that creation care becomes more important to the functionality and vitality of the worldview as a whole and so can withstand more and greater attacks (be it by disillusionment, fatigue, etc.) without being dropped from the system.

If we are to see the kind of real, long-lasting changes to our lifestyles and systems that the environmental crisis demands, people need to make changes to their ideologies, lifestyles, business models, etc. such that they will not return to old habits at the first sign of struggle. To achieve this, more sustainable and environmentally-friendly habits and systems need to be something that actors are disposed to implement in their social action, i.e., they need to be *habitus*.¹⁸⁶ In order for environmentally-friendly thinking and behaviour to become *habitus*, it must be properly integrated into the social structures that determine how people act in and view the world. For this to happen we need a variety of actions, like those EJPWG actions mentioned above, which are instantiations of our social structures which feature environmentally-friendly ideology/efforts in a such that they will make this environmentalism cohere with and mutually reinforce other aspects of our social systems so that they will through those instantiations become thoroughly and deeply entrenched in our systems. Environmentalist efforts which enable such thorough integration whilst actually achieving environmentalist aims are then extremely important as they not only are more likely to achieve repeated and further action in virtue of their success and the sense of accomplishment and confidence they give to actors, but because the demands they place on their audience and the moral authority, meaning and purpose that they carry with them becomes all the stronger and more prescriptive in virtue of the depth of their entrenchment (i.e., their being *habitus*). I would thus argue that other kinds of environmentalism have something to learn from the variety of aspects of one's worldview that the EJPWG's environmentalist efforts engage as they seem well-tailored to achieving this kind of integration.

¹⁸⁵ Like the youth and adult education groups I discussed previously in the last chapter or the creation care ministry groups mentioned in: (*Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life* [All Versions], 2010, P9)

¹⁸⁶ (Scott, 2015, '*Habitus*')

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed examples of edu-action resources, demonstrating not only what constitutes an edu-action resource and what they can achieve, but in doing so has also highlighted many of the environmentalist actions that the EJPWG frequently use and recommend to their members. This enabled a discussion of the highly practical, impactful, and accessible nature of the EJPWG's advice and suggested actions, as well as an illustration of why this is a beneficial approach to environmentalist action given the alienation of ordinary people and their efforts that frequently occurs in the secular environmentalist movement. Finally, it was demonstrated that the EJPWG's efforts to operationalize liberal Protestant resources such that they actively contribute to achieving environmentalist aims and to use a wide variety of said resources to do this is advantageous to efforts to achieve the long term changes to social structures that the environmental crisis requires as doing this ensures that more environmentally friendly habits and ideologies become thoroughly and deeply entrenched in our systems.

CHAPTER 6: WORSHIP RESOURCE MATERIALS

ENVIRONMENTALIST SERVICES

This chapter discusses a number of methods and practices where the operationalization of liberal Protestant resources for environmentalist aims can be grouped together under the theme of when/where they likely take place: during worship. Again there is a focus on the eleven documents that were produced as “resource materials for congregations and individuals wishing to celebrate God’s creation and explore issues pertaining to caring for God’s creation...”¹⁸⁷ as the best examples of the methods and practices that I wish to discuss are found in these documents. The pages that were most relevant to our current topic were (typically) pages four, five, and six.

The EJPWG frequently creates helpful resources for holding a worship event centring around a particular environmental topic. These environmentalist worship services are operationalizations of liberal Protestant resources as they use the worship structures, practices, and components of liberal Protestant worship events to achieve particular environmentalist aims.

Of the eleven documents we focus on here, seven of these documents were produced for use on Earth Day Sunday. Earth Day Sunday is an environmentalist service held on the closest Sunday to Earth Day (22nd of April) where a church community will take a day to pray, learn about, and take action in relation to an aspect of creation.¹⁸⁸ The eight documents produced as resources for Earth Day Sunday aim to provide congregations with the materials needed to pray, learn about, and take action in relation to a particular aspect of, or issues facing, creation. The remaining four documents do not differ from those produced for Earth Day Sunday to any real degree, the only significant difference is that they were not produced specifically for Earth Day Sunday but were instead for general use.

The eleven documents aim to aid congregations in celebrating God’s creation and exploring issues pertaining to caring for creation¹⁸⁹; a goal which is not dissimilar to those worship services the early Sierra Club held to heighten “congregants appreciation of natural beauty”

¹⁸⁷ (*Our Daily Bread*, 2007, P8)

¹⁸⁸ (CreationJustice.org, 2021d)

¹⁸⁹ (*Our Daily Bread*, 2007, P8)

and to inspire them to “act for the preservation and conservation of nature”.¹⁹⁰ Examples of themes of these documents include: the protection of wilderness areas; the effects of pollution on human health and our environment; the interconnectedness of issues relating to race, poverty, and the environment as highlighted by natural disasters; and caring for creation through sustainable agriculture and agricultural policy.

ENVIRONMENTALIST SERMONS

The section ‘Sermon Starters’ typically offers two or three brief ideas for sermon topics, with a connection drawn between the proffered passages of scripture and an aspect of the document’s central environmental issue(s) using a moral-theological argument. They conclude with an explanation of how these scriptural passages ought to inform our ideas about and our actions toward the natural world.

An example of a ‘sermon starter’ is found in the document *Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life: Worship Spaces as Stewardship*. According to which, due to the “blessings that God bestows, we are called to be... faithful stewards... caring for who and what God loves and working to further the kingdom of God” and this call to stewardship includes caring for sacred spaces in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner.¹⁹¹ The passages of scripture utilised in the sermon starter ‘Faith in the House of the Lord’ are Psalm 23 and Acts 9:36-43.¹⁹² In the story from Acts a woman rises from the dead after healing prayer is performed by Peter whose aid was petitioned by a number of disciples who had lived faith in the healing powers of God.¹⁹³ Psalm 23 serves as an act of praise to a steadfast God that stands with his people in all circumstances, no matter how difficult they may seem.¹⁹⁴ These passages of scripture are connected to the theme in the following manner:

...the impacts of climate change bring damage to both God’s creation and God’s people. But... this story and this Psalm is a reminder to trust in the healing power and steadfastness of God, and to act upon it.

And act we can. The spaces in which we worship are to be reflective of the faith we claim. If we claim faith in the healing power of the Lord, we ought to use the space in which we worship God accordingly. It means creating and living in that space in a way that is in right relationship with all of God’s Creation - being energy efficient, using water and land wisely and prudently, and making sure the products that we use... care for all of God’s Creation.¹⁹⁵

This sermon starter uses the teachings of Psalm 23 and the story from Acts to illustrate the necessity of, and thereby motivate, environmentally-conscious action. Worship spaces, according to the sermon starter, come to reflect lived faith in a steadfast healer God through actions that ensure that maintenance of worship spaces heals environmental degradation and ensures that all parts of the earth stand in a beneficial and harmonious relation with one another again. These actions enact the biblically mandated transmutation of one’s faith from merely

¹⁹⁰ (Berry, 2015, P91)

¹⁹¹ (*Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life* [All Versions}, 2010, P1-2)

¹⁹² Ibid. P6

¹⁹³ (New King James Version, 1982, Acts 9:36-43)

¹⁹⁴ (New King James Version, 1982, Psalm 23)

¹⁹⁵ (*Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life* [All Versions}, 2010, P6)

being beliefs-as-held to beliefs-as-lived. The scripture passages and the call to act in accordance with these passages provide a particular form of moral-theological argument that typically takes place in the context of a worship service and which are often an important part of such a service: a sermon. Moreover, this datum, its focus on motivating environmental stewardship in the churches of liberal Protestants, and the environmentalist sermons of which it is an exemplar once more reflect the belief of proponents of the Christian stewardship model that churches should be “creation awareness centers”¹⁹⁶ in the actions of the EJPWG.

The reasoning behind the creation of such environmentally-directed sermons seems to draw on the very nature of sermons as a way for a church/community leader to offer an educational address to the congregation on a matter considered to be of moral and/or theological importance for the purpose of offering guidance or exhortation. A sermon directed toward an environmental issue draws on this by offering a theologically grounded manner for the congregation to approach thinking about, and acting in and toward, the natural world. These environmentalist sermons reflect the “mountaineering-themed sermons” given in Puget Sound area churches in 1913 at “mountain-themed services” organised by members of the Mountaineers¹⁹⁷, and the provision of ‘sermon starters’ mirrors the “clerical manuals for ‘nature-sermons’” that emerged in Progressive American churches in the years after John Muir’s death.¹⁹⁸ The sermons not only operationalize liberal Protestant resources by drawing on liberal Protestant ethics, narratives, and teachings, but they operationalize the practice of sermon-giving itself. These sermons become a means through which a speaker might not only raise awareness of an issue, but also a way that they can explain the moral, theological, and environmental relevance of such issues to their congregation.

These sermons are exhortations on the part of the speaker which urge the listener to engage in particular forms of action and thinking in order to combat a given issue, in these cases particular environmental issues. As such, they make use of the sense of meaning and purpose that religions can provide to our lives and thus to our environmentalist efforts; for their reasoning draws on much that is central to the worldviews and moralities of many liberal Protestants and uses it to justify such efforts.¹⁹⁹ Similarly they also make use of the substantial moral authority that liberal Protestant traditions often have over their adherents.²⁰⁰ However, the worship context is a time when many liberal Protestants make an effort to connect with, understand, and reflect upon the teachings of their faith as presented by an authority figure and to thereby come to understand how they might better realize their faith. In light of this, the claims and moral-theological arguments presented in sermons come with an already heightened degree of moral authority which is only further compounded by the moral authority that the theologically-grounding resources that they draw on provide to their claims.

Furthermore, whilst numbers present at worship services, and who thus can hear, reflect on, and potentially adopt the exhortations contained in these sermons, will vary depending on a number of factors (the time of the week/year, the popularity of a particular house of worship, etc.), the raw number of attendants at these services each week is often sufficiently large such that mobilising even a fraction of them through these sermons could make a significant impact upon the advancement of particular environmentalist aims within a given community, set of

¹⁹⁶ (Kearns, 1996, P60)

¹⁹⁷ (Berry, 2015, P92 and 100)

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. P82

¹⁹⁹ (Gardner, 2006, P43-47)

²⁰⁰ Ibid. P47

households, etc.²⁰¹ If we combine all that we have discussed here these sermons, if timed correctly and presented in a thoughtful and theologically well-grounded manner, can harness the power their context and tradition provide, and thus have the potential to greatly assist in achieving environmentalist aims.

BULLETIN INSERTS

In this section a deep analysis of the bulletin insert in *Tending the Garden: Stewardship of Biodiversity and Endangered Species* (which centres around the topic of protecting biodiversity²⁰²) is carried out. This is done because it is an illustrative example of the typical shape of the EJPWG's bulletin inserts, but also of the typical liturgical formulary of the environmentalist services they propound and the kinds of worship practices and rituals that they frequently operationalize therein.

The document's fifth and sixth pages can be folded in half to make a four page insert that can be placed into a church's weekly service bulletin. The bulletin insert offers a summary of the core topic of the service (which are typically foreshortened versions of the educational information and moral-theological argument(s) provided on the first page of the document), along with outlining how (roughly) the service will progress and providing copies of some of the prayers, litany, hymns, etc., that will be performed during the service. Let us now properly analyse and discuss each of the components frequently outlined in the bulletin insert and what they can tell us about these environmentally directed services.

The resource materials provided in the bulletin insert act as something of a liturgical resource to the church leader/organising committee, as well as demonstrating the variety of ways a worship service can be directed toward an environmentalist topic. A worship service can be directed toward an environmentalist issue by utilising and/or creating worship practices (e.g., blessings, litany, and hymns) that are directed toward creation and various environmental issues in terms of their content, the ethical imperatives they contain, etc.. This liturgical resource minimally spans pages two and three of the bulletin insert and in some cases will stretch into page four of the bulletin insert. In other cases, as in the case of *Tending the Garden*, page four offers a list of actions that individuals and congregations can take in relation to the document's core issue.²⁰³

In *Tending the Garden* we see a call to worship (adapted from Psalms 104 and 108, as well as I Chronicles 29) which praises God for all his works on Earth and all the creatures he has made whilst reiterating that everything on heaven and earth is his.²⁰⁴ There is then a prayer of confession in which the audience confesses their failure to act as stewards of the Earth and repents for the harm that human action has caused to creation.²⁰⁵ This prayer also asks God to fill the petitioner with love for him and all of creation, and with a desire for the well-being of the entire Earth community.²⁰⁶ Following this is a litanical prayer of thanks (based in Psalms 24, 96, and 104, as well as I Chronicles 29) that praises God for the diversity of creation and

²⁰¹ Ibid. P49

²⁰² (*Tending the Garden*, 2010, P1-8)

²⁰³ (*Tending the Garden*, 2010, P5)

²⁰⁴ Ibid. P6

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

for how perfectly all aspects of creation support one another's needs and well-being.²⁰⁷ Finally, there is a short benediction asking that God's Spirit be close beside the congregation, that they see the beauty and gift of creation, and that they be filled with gratitude and act with love and mercy²⁰⁸, as well as a list of creation-directed hymns which can be sung during the service.²⁰⁹

Elsewhere, we also see assurances of pardon, prayers of the people, and gathering meditations. The numerous worship practices used by the EJPWG in bulletin inserts reiterate some of the ways that we have previously noted their methods and practices to be particularly strong. For instance, like the moral-theological arguments discussed previously, these prayers, hymns, litanies, etc., clearly also make use of the moral authority²¹⁰ that the worship setting provides, as well as the space and time such a setting provides for engagement with moral issues and moral reflection. In addition, like the event outlined in *Blessing of the Animals*, in further connecting care for the Earth to a variety of aspects of the Christian tradition, acts of worship like prayer and hymnal singing only further strengthen the position of creation care within that tradition. However, operationalizing worship practices like prayer and hymnal singing is useful to achieving environmentalist aims in a number of manners we have not seen before

The act of reciting a prayer of confession does not fulfil its intended purpose (confessing one's sins/moral failings to God and receiving divine forgiveness) if one unfeelingly recites the prayer without recognition of how erred. A lack of understanding of how one erred means that one is more likely to repeat the same mistakes, rather than address them and grow. However, when one recites the prayer, internalises and reflects on its message, and draws connections between one's own life and its claim, the confession is morally strengthened. Those wrongs which one confesses to, along with one's cries for forgiveness and for the tools to be better, come to hold greater moral weight as you better understand your error, how you can do better, etc.

Moreover, because prayer is seen as communing with God, by confessing and repenting for these wrongs moral absolution is achieved and one makes a binding commitment to attempt to do better in the future. God's being the ultimate moral authority makes those commitments made in prayer more strong and authoritative over one's future actions. Furthermore, for many liberal Protestants, the ideas, solutions, actions, etc., which arise during prayer are frequently thought to be coming from God and so are more morally motivating and authoritative.²¹¹ Therefore, the commitments to environmentalist action made in prayer will likely have a higher chance of transferring to real action.

The act of praying reflectively, contemplatively, and in an engaged manner then provides tools that not only give one's moral reasoning and reflection on an issue/topic direction, but which increases the strength that the confessions, the moral imperatives, and the commitments contained therein have over behaviour as we fully and more viscerally understand those claims and they are made to the ultimate moral authority. Operationalizing acts of prayer for

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ (Gardner, 2006, P47)

²¹¹ Ibid.

environmental purposes is then potentially a useful technique for aiding recognition of environmental degradation and changing behaviour.

The use of creation-directed hymns has a similar potential to convey the meaning of environmentalist ideology and claims, and to increase chances of positive engagement with environmentalist matters. Music has long been regarded as being capable of carrying meaning and evoking strong emotional reactions²¹² from both listeners and producers. Music's ability to provoke emotion through lyrics, melody, and rhythm, can imbue the listener with a sense of meaning and purpose that then motivates them to act on these emotions. This can be seen in the protest songs of the 1960s, Irish rebel songs, and music decrying the mistreatment and subjugation of Black Americans. As such, music could be an extremely powerful tool in educating people about environmentalist issues and motivating action. In cases like the hymns used by the EJPWG, where the images, motifs, messages, etc., contained in them have the rich pool of liberal Protestant narratives and the like to draw upon, the resonance that the music's messages will have are only strengthened by the resources they draw upon.

However, as Cross points out music is "bound to its contexts of occurrence in ways that enable it to derive meaning from, and interactively to confer meaning on, the experiential context in which it occurs..."²¹³ Those messages and meanings which are conveyed through music (in our case creation directed hymns) then both derive meaning from the space they are performed in (i.e., the worship setting during an environmentalist service) whilst simultaneously conferring a meaning of message onto that setting.

One of the hymns recommended in *Tending the Garden* is the hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'.²¹⁴ This song extolls the beauty and greatness of creation and reiterates the metaphysical claim that God is the source of all things. In this way, the song praises and celebrates both creation and God's work in creating it. Placing this song in the context in which it might be sung this meaning grows richer; for this hymn might be sung during a service centring on celebrating and inspiring the protection of the biodiversity of the earth. In this context the reiteration of the claim that God, an omnibenevolent, omniscient, omnipotent being, created all the various aspects of creation means that the song's praising the great diversity in creation is aimed at illustrating that a biodiverse creation is what God has intended and so creation *must* be biodiverse. In educating congregants on the theologically-grounded necessity of biodiversity in this context, the hymn confers onto the worship setting the possibility of its being a place for environmental education, action, awareness, etc. Furthermore, the context of the worship setting as a time and space where attendees are prepared to engage in their own moral-theological education, means that the space lends extra weight and authority²¹⁵ to the hymn's claims of the importance of biodiversity and its protection and the discussion of environmental issues.

Ultimately then a combination of the use of the worship setting and the operationalization of worship practices for environmentalist purposes enables one to educate congregants about environmental issues and how we ought to treat creation, as well as to inspire action on environmental issues, in a powerful and highly motivating manner. How adaptable these methods are for use in non-liberal Protestant environmentalism is beyond the scope of this

²¹² (Koelsch, 2010, P131)

²¹³ (Cross, 2003, P108)

²¹⁴ (Alexander, 1848)

²¹⁵ (Gardner, 2006, P47)

paper; however, these methods are so successful at achieving their aims that even if they only work within liberal Protestant denominations or other similar Christian traditions and denominations this would still mean that they would likely mobilise a large number of individuals as many of these denomination boast large numbers of adherents across the globe.²¹⁶

CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the purpose of ‘environmentalist services’ and discussed how they operationalize the worship context and some of its practices to achieve environmentalist ends. In my discussion of environmentalist sermons I illustrated not only how they operationalize moral-theological arguments to educate and engage the congregation with environmentalist matters, but how they draw upon the nature of sermons as tools for moral education and exhortation. Following this, I examined how the documents operationalize worship practices and rituals to achieve environmentalist education and motivate action. I illustrated how advantageous the utilisation of prayer for environmentalism is due to the deep reflection that it aids, as well as how successfully it incites real behaviour and ideology changes given the nature of prayer as communing with God. Finally, my analysis of the operationalization of hymnal singing allowed me to elucidate how music’s ability to convey meaning greatly benefits the audience’s understanding of a given environmental topic/issue, as well as how its bounding to its context makes the hymn’s meaning all the more impactful and its claims all the more authoritative.

²¹⁶ Ibid. P49

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

THE 'LAY-PERSON FRIENDLY APPROACH'

This chapter will collate and discuss my findings from the previous three chapters as they answer my research questions: (i) what are the methods and practices of the liberal Protestant environmentalism of the EJPWG for the period 2006-2010? and; (ii) what is the impact of liberal Protestant resources on those methods and practices?

The EJPWG provided well-researched, accessible, and non-scholarly introductions to a number of environmental issues and topics that are emotionally and morally engaging and thus have the potential to be action motivating in their educational resource materials. Our discussion of these educational introductions highlighted the 'lay-person friendly approach' that EJPWG adopted in much of their work. For these introductions were clearly aimed at illuminating the state-of-play to those who were as of yet unaware or only very minorly aware of a particular issue. Given that the EJPWG's documents were intended to act as resources for their members, who would be mostly comprised of lay-individuals rather than professional environmentalists, that the documents aimed to be approachable and informative for lay-people demonstrates a thorough knowledge of who their intended audience is and what they need in order to care about environmentalist issues.

This lay-person friendly approach stood at the heart of our discussions of the EJPWG's action resource materials in Chapter Five. The EJPWG's lay-friendly approach to the actions that they recommend and offer guidance on in their edu-action resources, empowers their members to engage in tangible and impactful efforts and thus, encourages them to feel that environmentalism can benefit from their involvement. This makes them more likely to remain committed to active involvement with the movement, as well as providing necessary support and (potentially) further man-power to other efforts in the movement. Therefore, it would be of benefit to the wider environmentalist movement to engage in more efforts which take seriously the power of ordinary individuals and groups to contribute to environmentalist efforts and demonstrate to them their potential to aid the movement.

In a similar vein their operationalization of adult and youth education ministry groups for environmentalist aims, demonstrates recognition of the fact that many ordinary individuals can understand the need to engage with environmental issues, but that many people lack

opportunities for the kinds of critical discussions that provide a deep and motivating understanding of the moral necessity of such engagements. By recognising this fact and taking steps to target it, the EJPWG utilise a further beneficial method for inciting engagement based on their knowledge of their lay-person audience.

By examining EJPWG environmentalism we have been able to discern a number of methods/practices of their LPE that are advantageous for achieving environmentalist goals relating to action, education, and motivation given their instantiation of a lay-person friendly approach to their environmentalism. Additionally, these examinations have highlighted not only how beneficial it can be for environmentalist actors to know their target audience well and make use of this in their efforts, but to utilise the power of the contributions of the lay-people who make up the majority of unsustainable societies.

KNOWING AND USING YOUR RESOURCES

Our examinations in Chapter Four illustrated that moral-theological arguments can use liberal Protestant resources to provide a theological and related moral grounding for environmentalist action/ideology. This is not, however, the only way that liberal Protestant resources are put to use in the EJPWG's environmentalism and various aspects of these resources are also put to work by them.

The environmentally directed sermons that I discussed in Chapter Six make use of liberal Protestant narratives, teachings, etc., to ground their addresses and exhortations. However, this method also makes use of the nature of this practice as an explicit point of guidance from a moral leader about how congregants ought to actualise their faith in their lives beyond the church. In this way, the nature of such a practice as a provision of guidance for Christian living in one's daily life, along with the socio-cultural significance of that practice and position of the person giving the sermon for audience members, is utilised to further strengthen its ability to motivate particular ideological points/actions.

The methods/practices of prayer, hymnal singing, and environmentalist services that we discussed in Chapter Six similarly demonstrate the multitude of ways liberal Protestant resources and various aspects of their nature can be operationalized to achieve environmentalist aims. The nature of the practice of prayer as a reverent and reflective method for communing with God and the psychological affective power of music as it is instantiated in hymnal singing bolster the liberal Protestant resources theologically grounding the prayer/hymn's messages, making them better equipped to achieve their environmentalist aims. In the case of environmentalist services, the very act of holding an environmentalist service operationalizes the worship space as a context for education in one's faith and what is demanded of one by God. The socio-cultural significance of the space thereby confers moral authority and meaning onto the efforts performed in that space concerning celebrating and caring for creation.

When we synthesize all of these findings we find that the resources that liberal Protestant traditions can beneficially contribute to environmentalist efforts are much broader than the five assets Gardner highlighted religions as being able to contribute to environmentalist efforts. Gardner of course does not claim that these assets are the only resources religions can contribute; nor am I claiming that the resources that I have discussed LPE as using are superior to Gardner's, for often in my discussions I often highlighted how the work of the specifically liberal Protestant resources that the methods and practices employed were beneficially

bolstered by some of Gardner's assets. What I am arguing is simply that the resources liberal Protestant streams can beneficially contribute to environmentalism are not solely limited to Gardner's five assets.

Furthermore, as our discussion of *Blessing of the Animals* in Chapter Five illustrated, the EJPWG's operationalization of numerous kinds of liberal Protestant resources in their methods and practices aids in beneficially entrenching environmentalism into liberal Protestant traditions. This thorough entrenchment is valuable as we need more sustainable and environmentally-friendly habits and systems to be something that actors are disposed to implement in their social action (i.e., they need to be *habitus*) if we are to curb the environmental crisis and environmentalism's entrenchment into a religious tradition, which are typically quite authoritative and action guiding for adherents, aids the realization of environmentally friendly behaviours.

In light of the number of adherents that many religious traditions possess, methods/practices like those of the EJPWG that help to entrench an environmentally-friendly *habitus* into religious traditions could be an extremely useful mechanism for fighting the environmental crisis. Moreover, as many other religious traditions likely also possess a number of resources that together mutually reinforce one another, other religious traditions might too be able to operationalize various components of their worldviews to entrench a more environmentally friendly and sustainable *habitus* among their adherents.

REFLECTIONS

I have demonstrated many of the core methods and practices of EJPWG liberal Protestant environmentalism in the period from 2006 to 2010, as well as the impact of liberal Protestant resources on those methods and practices. I have provided preliminary arguments for how beneficial practices like the education ministries, prayer, and hymnal singing could potentially be in achieving environmentalist aims, but it would serve the environmentalist movement and our understanding of RE for studies to be conducted aimed specifically at determining which, if any, of the methods and practices that I have highlighted are in fact the beneficial and advantageous for them.

Moreover, as I have only examined how the efforts and resources of one set of traditions have been usefully operationalized for environmentalist aims by one organisation, it would serve the field of religion and ecology and the environmentalist movement itself to study what resources belonging to other traditions can and have been usefully employed for environmentalist purposes, as well as how other liberal Protestant actors have operationalized their tradition's resources in their environmentalist methods and practice. Similarly, I only examined the EJPWG's efforts within a narrow timeframe and using only one channel for their environmentalism (documents produced to aid their members in celebrating and caring for creation) and a related method of analysis (document analysis). Expanding the timeframe and channel for their environmentalism that is examined and using alternative methods might yield further insights that were not available to me given the focus and nature of my study

Taking these steps will further substantiate the claim that religions have much to contribute to the environmentalist movement, as well as further close the research gaps that I noted in the field of religion and ecology.

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APPENDIX A

This appendix provides a list of the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program and Eco-Justice Working Group Documents from 2006-2010 that were used to as data sources for my research. Citation and access information for all documents is included.

Documents from 2006:

1. Anderson-Stembridge, M. and Radford, P. D., (2006), *Bottom Line Ministries that Matter: Congregational Stewardship with Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy Technologies*, C. Carmichael and K. Galles (eds.), [PDF] 1st Edition, Washington DC, National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, P1-16. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/u3w45>, Accessed on: 13/04/2021.
2. Barnes-Davies, R., (2006), *Environmental Racism: An Ecumenical Study Guide*, Washington DC, National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Working Group, P1-17 (+Cover Sheet). Available at: https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/racialjustice/enviromentalracismecumenicalstudyguide.pdf, Accessed on: 14/04/2021.
3. National Council of Churches USA Eco-Justice Program, (2006), *At the Lord's Table: Everyday Thanksgiving*, Washington DC, Eco-Justice Program National Council of Churches, P1-8. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/v3x46>, Accessed on: 14/04/2021.
4. National Council of Churches USA Eco-Justice Program, (2006), *Through the Eyes of a Hurricane: Rebuilding Just Communities*, Washington DC, Eco-Justice Program National Council of Churches, P1-8. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/b3c02>, Accessed on: 12/04/2021.
5. National Council of Churches USA Eco-Justice Working Group, (2006), *Resolution on Global Warming*, [Online] National Council of Churches USA Policy Statements, Resolutions, Messages and Documents. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20110706073134/http://www.ncccusa.org/NCCpolicies/globalwarming.htm>, Accessed on: 15/04/2021.
6. Norcross, B., (2006), *Building a Firm Foundation: A Creation Friendly Building Guide for Churches*, C. Carmichael (ed.), [PDF] 1st Edition, Washington DC, National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, P1-34. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/t3v44>, Accessed on: 13/04/2021.

Documents from 2007:

1. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, (2007), *Mindful Living: Human Health, Pollution, and Toxics*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, Eco-Justice Program

- National Council of Churches, P1-12. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/x3y23>, Accessed on: 19/04/2021.
2. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, (2007), *Our Daily Bread: Harvesters of Hope and Gardeners of Eden*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, Eco-Justice Program National Council of Churches, P1-8. Available at: https://www.commonword.ca/FileDownload/22637/2007_earth_day.pdf, Accessed on: 16/04/2021.
 3. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, (2007a), *Out of the Wilderness: Building Christian Faith and Keeping God's Creation*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, Eco-Justice Program National Council of Churches, P1-8. Available at: <https://earthministry.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Out-of-the-Wilderness.pdf>, Accessed on: 15/04/2021.
 4. National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Programs, (2007), *Christian Principles for a Healthy Body and Spirit* [Online]. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20110706140825/http://www.ncecojustice.org/health/ehpprinciples.php>, Accessed on: 20/04/2021.
 5. National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Programs, (2007), *Faith Principles on Global Warming* [Online]. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20110706142254/http://www.ncecojustice.org/climate/climateprinciples.php>, Accessed on: 19/04/2021.

Documents from 2008:

1. Edgar, T. and Xu, L., (2008), *Climate and Church: How Global Climate Change Will Impact Core Church Ministries*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, National Council of Churches USA Eco-Justice Program, P1-16. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/p3r40>, Accessed on: 20/04/2021.
2. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, (2008), *Made in the Image of God: Campaign for Safe Cosmetics*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, P1-2. Available at: <https://www.calameo.com/read/00057124280a1142c9833>, Accessed on: 21/04/2021.
3. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, (2008), *The Poverty of Global Climate Change*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, Eco-Justice Program National Council of Churches, P1-8. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/o3q39>, Accessed on: 21/04/2021.
4. National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Programs, (2008), *Blessing of the Animals* [Online]. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20110706133653/http://www.ncecojustice.org/biodiversity/animalblessing.php>, Accessed on: 21/04/2021.

Documents from 2009:

1. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, (2009), *Celebrating and Caring for God's Creation*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, Eco-Justice Programs National

- Council of Churches, P1-8. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/s3u43>, Accessed on: 22/04/2021.
2. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Programs, (2009), *Cleanliness and Godliness: A Green Cleaning Toolkit*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, National Council of Churches in Christ Eco-Justice Programs, P1-4. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/r3t42>, Accessed on: 22/04/2021.
 3. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Programs, (2009a), *Cleanliness and Godliness: A Guide for Planning a Green Cleaning Fellowship Event*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, National Council of Churches in Christ Eco-Justice Programs, P1-11. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/q3s41>, Accessed on: 22/04/2021.
 4. National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Programs, (2009), *Green Camp and Conference Centre Covenant* [Online]. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20110706141631/http://www.nccecojustice.org/outdoor/campcovenant.php>, Accessed on: 22/04/2021.
 5. NationalCouncilofChurches.us, (2009), *Resolution on Environmental Health* [Online]. Available at: <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness/2009/env-health.php>, Accessed on: 23/04/2021.

Documents from 2010²¹⁷:

1. 2010 Centennial Ecumenical Gathering and General Assembly of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA and Church World Service, (2010), *Christian Understanding of Creation in an Age of Environmental Crisis*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, National Council of Churches, P1-10. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20110706092654/http://www.nccusa.org/witnesses2010/christian-understanding-of-creation.pdf>, Accessed on: 23/04/2021.
2. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) Environmental Ministries, (2010), *Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life: Worship Spaces as Stewardship* [Presbyterian Church USA Version], 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, National Council of Churches, P1-12. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/Z8Y/l3m11>, Accessed on: 27/04/2021.
3. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, (2010), *Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life: Worship Spaces as Stewardship* [General Version], 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, National Council of Churches, P1-12. Available at: https://www.commonword.ca/FileDownload/22630/2010_earth_day.pdf, Accessed on: 27/04/2021.

²¹⁷ Please note that in 2010, unlike in the other years that I studied for this paper, five different versions of the resource *Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life: Worship Spaces as Stewardship* were produced. One version was produced for general use (which I did examine) and four denomination specific versions were produced, two of which are relevant to me here: (i) the version produced for use by members of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and (ii) the version produced for use by the United Methodist Church. The contents of these documents were entirely the same, save and except for the contents of their final pages (page 12 in each of the documents); in instances where I discuss a page in these documents where the content is the same across the versions of these documents, I will not refer to one specific version of these documents.

4. National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, (2010), *Tending the Garden: Stewardship of Biodiversity and Endangered Species*, 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, National Council of Churches, P1-8. Available at: <https://en.calameo.com/read/000570747587d4a8b8cf7>, Accessed on: 27/04/2021.
5. National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Programs, (2010), *Green Churches: Building Blocks* [Online]. Available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20100603090434/http://www.ncecojustice.org/greenchurch/grbuildingblocks.php>, Accessed on: 29/04/2021.
6. The National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program and The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, (2010), *Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life: Worship Spaces as Stewardship* [United Methodist Church Version], 1st Edition [PDF], Washington DC, National Council of Churches, P1-12. Available at: <https://www.calameo.com/read/000571242f1ff4755e634>, Accessed on: 29/04/2021.