

# **The Environment**

**I. Introduction.**

**II. What does Scripture Say?**

**III. What about Wesley and our Methodist Roots?**

**IV. The Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation.**

**V. What about Global Warming?**

**VI. Common Misunderstandings.**

**VII. Conclusion: Caring for Creation and the Worship of God.**

**Bibliography**

**Appendix: The Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation.**

## **I. Introduction**

Scripture reveals that God is the Creator. To love God implies caring for his creation. Genesis 2:15 says, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (ESV). Caring for creation is not only a matter of obedience or an expression of our love for God but can also be a form of ‘culturally relevant evangelism’. There exists the potential for Christ-followers to connect with those among his human creation who share an environmental concern. The following story illustrates this principle.

Stephen Rand, the director of *The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund (Tearfund)*, relates a story about planting trees in Ethiopia. The government had given a church 500 hectares of land but this was not a generous gift because the land was desolate due to deforestation (which led to famine). The church enlisted the help of local residents to work the land and plant trees, and they were paid for their work with food. Soon relationships began to develop. Years later the tiny saplings had grown over 30 feet tall and what once looked like a rocky lunar landscape was restored and transformed into a productive environment. The government was so impressed that they gave the church another 500 hectares of land. But there was greater evidence of the work of God than

merely a changed landscape. The area of this restoration project was in a region where missionaries had preached for twenty years with little success. But after the reforestation project led by the church the people were now asking questions. Why would the church do this? And the reply is simple: it is out of obedience to God and an expression of our love for God that we care for creation. Ultimately the pastor was able to say it was God's love for them that could not only change landscapes, but transform their lives as well. "As a result, some had made a commitment to Christ, and a church had been established. Planting trees had been persuasive preaching."<sup>1</sup> The challenge for all Christians is to live, caring for creation, as an expression of God's love.

## **II. What does Scripture say?**

For many Christians, the starting point on a topic such as this is Scripture. Scripture has much to say about the Earth. The very first verse in Scripture affirms that in the beginning God created (Gen. 1:1). Not only did God create this world, He pronounced it good (Gen. 1-2). The Incarnation and Resurrection further affirm that God considers this physical world He created to be good. Unfortunately, due to human disobedience to the command of God, God's good creation was cursed (Gen. 3:17). As a result, the apostle Paul writes that creation groans under the weight of sin (Rom. 8:20-22). Even though creation groans God still sustains it (Heb. 1:2-3). In fact, after the flood of Genesis chapter 8, there are six references to God's covenant with creation in Genesis chapter 9. It is an everlasting and unconditional covenant that God makes with not merely Noah and his family, but also with all of creation (note: *every* living thing).<sup>2</sup> Not only does God sustain His creation, Scripture affirms that God's creation declares the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-4, Psalm 104, Romans 1:20-23). Although this world is

groaning because of sin, and subject to death and decay, Revelation 11:18 warns that a time will come "...for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great— *and for destroying those who destroy the earth.*" Ultimately Scripture affirms that there will one day be a new heaven and new earth (Is. 65:17-23, Rev. 21:1, 5).

### **III. What about John Wesley and our Methodist Roots?**

This is a surprising question since the environmental movement is a fairly recent development in human history. Many regard Francis of Assisi as the theologian of nature. Lynn White, in the article "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" pointed to him as an example for Christians to emulate:

Possibly we should ponder the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ: Saint Francis of Assisi. ... The key to an understanding of Francis is his belief in the virtue of humility – not merely for the individual but for man as a species. Francis tried to depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God's creatures. With him the ant is no longer simply a homily for the lazy, flames a sign of the thrust of the soul toward union with God; now they are Brother Ant and Sister Fire, praising the Creator in their own ways as Brother Man does in his ... Later commentators have said that Francis preached to the birds as a rebuke to men who would not listen. The records do not read so; he urged the little birds to praise God, and in spiritual ecstasy they flapped their wings and chirped rejoicing. Legends of saints, especially Irish saints, had long told of their dealings with animals, but always, I believe, to show their human dominance over creatures. With Francis it was different.<sup>3</sup>

White concludes his discussion by proposing that St. Francis should become the patron saint of ecologists!

John Wesley should also be considered. Theodore Runyon's book *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* has a section that addresses this very question.

Admittedly "...ecology was not on the theological agenda in Wesley's day."<sup>4</sup> Runyon (along with other Wesley scholars like Albert Outler) identified the restoration of

the *image of God* (Eph. 4:23, Col. 3:10) as a central theme to Wesley's theology. This theology has implications for present social issues. Does a restoration of the image of God have implications for social issues such as the environment? As Steven Bouma-Prediger said in his book *For the Beauty of the Earth*, "Our vocation is not contingent on results or the state of the planet. It is simply dependent on our character as God's response-able human image bearers."<sup>5</sup> Wesley was able to make this connection between humanity as response-able (and therefore *responsible*) image bearers and the environment. For example, while many were focused on the things to come, "Wesley understood God's goal as the transformation of this present age, restoring health and holiness to God's creation."<sup>6</sup>

Wesley had an interest not only in theology and the things of God, but also in science and the natural world. His interests were very diverse. They:

...extended from observations on the immense variety of species that inhabit the globe, to climatic conditions around the earth, to scientific phenomena such as electricity with which he experimented, acquainting himself with the experiments conducted by Benjamin Franklin and others. The breadth of his interests is illustrated in the five-volume Natural Philosophy he authored, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation*. ...This survey ranged from the physical complexities of the human body to the animal kingdom (in which he included birds, fish, reptiles, and insects), complete with observations on ecology – how all these creatures are able to live together, each occupying a niche within the overall plan of a benevolent Creator.<sup>7</sup>

In this work Wesley develops an ecological world view where everything has its appointed place. In the preface to the American edition of *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*, Wesley writes:

By acquainting ourselves with subjects in natural philosophy, we enter into a kind of association with nature's works, and unite in the general concert of her extensive choir. By thus acquainting and familiarizing ourselves with the works of nature, we become as it were a member of her family, a participant in her

felicities; but while we remain ignorant, we are like strangers and sojourners in a foreign land, unknowing and unknown.<sup>8</sup>

Was it merely a hobby for Wesley to observe the natural world so closely, or was there something more to his interest? Runyon considers the theology of a restoration of the *image of God* as it relates to this topic of the environment. For Wesley there is a direct link. Runyon quotes Wesley's commentary on the Beatitude 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God,' and then adds his own commentary to it drawing out the implications of Wesley's theology for today:

[Wesley writes] The pure of heart see *all things full of God*. They see him in the firmament of heaven, in the moon walking in brightness, in the sun when he rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. They see him 'making the clouds his chariots, and walking upon the wings of the wind.' They see him 'preparing rain for the earth,' 'and blessing the increase of it.'

[Runyon comments] This vision of God is a vision of all creation *in* God, and God *in* all of creation. The lesson which our blessed Lord inculcates in this Beatitude, says Wesley, 'is that God is in all things, and that we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature [i.e., reflected in every creature]; that we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God, which indeed is a kind of practical atheism.'<sup>9</sup>

Wesley is not a pantheist; he knows that creation is distinct from the Creator. However, his survey of nature led him to write extensively on this in *The Wisdom of God in Creation*. For Wesley, nature had a harmony that was established when God pronounced that His creation was good. This harmony has been disrupted due to the effects of the Fall but Scripture promises the renewal of creation and a day when the lion will lie down with the lamb (Is. 65:25). Restoration of the image of God has implications for environmental issues, for the children of God will be blessed, they shall see God, and shall see the wisdom of God in creation. To look at the natural world apart from God is what Wesley calls practical atheism, a sin and offence to the Creator.

#### **IV. The Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation**

In 1994 a number of concerned Christian leaders, scientists, and theologians drafted *The Evangelical Declaration on the Environment*. This document can be found on-line at [www.creationcare.org](http://www.creationcare.org) or in the book: *The Care of Creation* edited by R.J. Berry. Berry writes in the opening chapter of that book:

If environmental problems are as serious as the experts make out, Christians clearly have a need to focus their response as a matter of both survival and significant apologetics. But there is a deeper issue: if creation care is a divine mandate laid on all humankind, and if Christ's saving work really did involve reconciling to the Father 'all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven' (Col. 1:20), then neglecting creation care is a sin and not merely an option on an overcrowded agenda.<sup>10</sup>

Simply put, if caring for creation is a commandment of God, not caring for it is a sin.

John Stott also agrees that Christians should be environmentally concerned: "Christian people should surely have been in the vanguard of the movement for environmental responsibility, because of our doctrines of creation and stewardship. Did God make the world? Does he sustain it? Has he committed its resources to our care? His personal concern for his own creation should be sufficient to inspire us to be equally concerned."<sup>11</sup>

Berry and Stott are not alone, for Ghilleen T. Prance has said the same thing:

In response to the many people who are exploring the world's ideologies and religions in search for resources in healing the Earth, the Christian *Declaration* calls for repentance, for action, for examination of the biblical basis for creation care, and for investigation of what creation reveals to us about God. If we were to do all these things, then Christians would be in the forefront of the environmental movement rather than leaving the action to the pagans.<sup>12</sup>

The *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation* has been endorsed by a number of Christian leaders such as: Alister McGrath, Ted Engstrom, Richard Foster, David L.

McKenna, J. I. Packer, Eugene Peterson, Ronald Sider, John R. W. Stott, etc. In fact, nearly 500 Christian leaders have endorsed this document.

The *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation* has identified seven degradations of creation:

- 1) land degradation;
- 2) deforestation;
- 3) species extinction;
- 4) water degradation;
- 5) global toxification;
- 6) the alteration of atmosphere;
- 7) human and cultural degradation.

The *Declaration* invites the people of God to respond to the corruption of God's good creation. This call to action in the *Declaration* includes four spiritual responses for the children of God.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that the Bible calls us to respond in four ways:

First, God calls us to confess and repent of attitudes which devalue creation, and which twist or ignore biblical revelation to support our misuse of it. Forgetting that "the earth is the Lord's," we have often simply used creation and forgotten our responsibility to care for it.

Second, our actions and attitudes toward the earth need to proceed from the center of our faith, and be rooted in the fullness of God's revelation in Christ and the Scriptures. We resist both ideologies which would presume the Gospel has nothing to do with the care of non-human creation and also ideologies which would reduce the Gospel to nothing more than the care of that creation.

Third, we seek carefully to learn all that the Bible tells us about the Creator, creation, and the human task. In our life and words we declare that full good news for all creation which is still waiting "with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God," (Rom. 8:19).

Fourth, we seek to understand what creation reveals about God's divinity, sustaining presence, and everlasting power, and what creation teaches us of its God-given order and the principles by which it works.<sup>13</sup>

## V. What about Global Warming?

The *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation* has no reference to global warming. Caring for creation is obviously broader than addressing that one issue alone. Steven Bouma-Prediger's book *For the Beauty of the Earth* develops a biblical theology of creation and the importance of caring for the environment. His conclusion may defuse the global warming debate:

The practical consequences of such a radical faith are themselves radical. For example, discussions of what is 'realistic' take on a different tone. The answer, of course, all depends on what is really real. If God is really at the center of things and God's good future is the most certain reality, then the truly realistic course of action is to buck the dominant consequentialist ethic of our age – which says that one should act only if one's actions will most likely bring about good consequences – and simply, because we are people who embody the virtue of hope, do the right thing. If we believe it is part of our task as earth-keepers to recycle, then we ought to recycle, whether or not it will change the world. Do the right thing. If we think it part and parcel of our ecological obedience to drive less and walk more, then that we ought to do. Do the right thing. We are to fulfill our calling to be caretakers of the earth, regardless of whether global warming is real, or there are holes in the ozone layer, or three nonhuman species become extinct each day. Our vocation is not contingent on results or the state of the planet. It is simply dependent on our character as God's response-able human image bearers.<sup>14</sup>

Debates about global warming are really secondary to the most important question:

The fundamental question for anyone who cares about the creation is not 'What must we do about the environment?', but 'Who is God?' And the answer that the *Declaration* gives is powerfully framed, beginning by affirming that God is the Creator, first and foremost. ... As the starting-point is therefore seen as the character of God, so the first response of the believer is not a fix-it activism, but true worship of the Creator.<sup>15</sup>

## VI. Common Misunderstandings

In the foreword to the book *The Care of Creation* John Stott identified two extremes that are to be avoided with respect to how we relate to the Earth. First of all we are to avoid the *deification* of nature. As Stott says, "We *respect* nature because God

made it; we do not *revere* nature as if it were God and inviolable.”<sup>16</sup> The other and opposite extreme is an *exploitation* of nature. “Genesis 1 has been unjustly blamed for environmental irresponsibility. It is true that God commissioned the human race to ‘have dominion over’ the earth and to ‘subdue’ it (Gen. 1:26-28, NRSV), and these two Hebrew words are forceful. It would be absurd, however, to imagine that he who *created* the Earth then handed it over to us to be *destroyed*.”<sup>17</sup> If one extreme is pantheism (the worship of nature as if it were divine), the other extreme is to exploit nature as if *we* are God.

After Genesis chapter 1 was ‘unjustly blamed for environmental irresponsibility,’ several theologians and biblical scholars have attempted to provide an apologetic response to the accusation that Genesis 1:28 is a license for environmental exploitation. There have also been several attempts by individuals and committees to articulate a Christian theological perspective on the environment. Steven Bouma-Prediger provides this apologetic work when he addresses some environmentalists’ complaints against Christianity in his book: *For the Beauty of the Earth*. He readily admits that although the ecological complaint against Christianity is seriously flawed, a call for Christians to repent is still necessary for “We cannot escape culpability for our ecological sins of omissions and commission, neglect and abuse.”<sup>18</sup> The following four ecological complaints against Christianity are summarized from his chapter entitled “Is Christianity to Blame?”

Genesis 1:28 has been identified as a culprit for the ecological crisis. The question believers must ask is whether or not this text is a license for environmental exploitation. Bouma-Prediger acknowledges that Genesis 1:26 clearly distinguishes humans from the

rest of creation as being created in the image and likeness of God. Humans are distinct and unique in this regard. The significance of naming the creatures in Genesis 2:19-20 also indicates that humanity is unique in creation. But does ‘dominion’ of Genesis 1:28 mean ‘domination’? Here is Bouma-Prediger’s answer:

Psalm 72 speaks most clearly of the ideal king – of one who rules and exercises dominion properly. The psalm unequivocally states that such a ruler executes justice for the oppressed, delivers the needy, helps the poor, and embodies righteousness in all he does. In short, the proper exercise of dominion yields shalom – the flourishing of all creation. This is a far cry from domination. And Jesus, in the Gospel accounts, defines dominion in terms clearly contrary to the way it is usually understood. For Jesus, to rule is to serve. To exercise dominion is to suffer, if necessary, for the good of the other.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, to use Genesis 1:28 as a source of blame for an ecological crisis is poor exegesis. This complaint completely neglects other passages of Scripture including Genesis 2:15 which says that humanity is to *serve* creation. It is also interesting to note that after the destruction of the earth by the flood in Genesis chapter 8, God once again blesses creation in chapter 9:1. The command is for humanity to be fruitful and multiply, an echo of Genesis 1:28. The call for humanity to have ‘dominion over’ creation, however, is not included in this passage. It was a command given to humanity before the Fall.<sup>20</sup> Finally it is also a serious historical over-simplification to suggest that an interpretation of Genesis 1:28 is solely to blame for an ecological crisis. There are other factors that had an environmental impact which must be considered.

More ecological complaints against Christianity have been raised. For example, at times there has been in the Church a Greek philosophy that elevates the soul and all things spiritual over everything physical including the body and the created world. This dualism devalues nature; the Incarnation easily refutes this heresy.

A third ecological complaint against Christianity centres on some expressions of end-time theology. The complaint is based on:

...perceived inadequacies in Christian eschatology. For example, some argue that Christian eschatology negates any rationale for preserving the earth since the return of Jesus will usher in a completely new form of existence. ... [It is a skewed eschatology that]...teaches that this world is ephemeral and ultimately unimportant.<sup>21</sup>

In fact some understandings of the end times would go as far as celebrating the corruption of the earth as a supposed sign of the times! Bouma-Prediger asks, "...is it permissible for me to plunder your house just because some time in the future it will be torn down?"<sup>22</sup> Even if the premise was true (that eschatology spells the end for nature) the conclusion (therefore destroy the earth) does not follow.

Finally, Lynn White's 1966 article "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," claims that "...Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt."<sup>23</sup> It must be remembered that White suggested St. Francis as the patron saint of ecologists; therefore he was not advocating an entire rejection of Christianity. In the end he claims that "since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious...."<sup>24</sup> The burden of guilt is nevertheless placed upon Christianity for the ecological crisis because "human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion."<sup>25</sup> He then summarizes what Christianity taught with regards to nature and claims that this resulted in an exploitation of nature through the use of science and technology:

We would seem to be headed toward conclusions unpalatable to many Christians. Since both *science* and *technology* are blessed words in our contemporary vocabulary, some may be happy at the notions, first, that viewed historically, modern science is an extrapolation of natural theology, and second, that modern technology is at least partly to be explained as an Occidental, voluntarist realization of the Christian dogma of man's

transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature. But, as we now recognize, somewhat over a century ago science and technology – hitherto quite separate activities – joined to give mankind powers which, to judge by many of the ecologic effects, are out of control.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, “By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.”<sup>27</sup> It has been said that:

White, therefore, concludes that since Christianity made possible the growth of modern science and technology, and since science and technology have given us unprecedented and uncontrolled power over nature – power the misuse of which Christianity has sanctioned – Christianity is responsible for the plight of the earth.<sup>28</sup>

In developing his thesis, White misuses Genesis 1:28 for the concept of domination rather than dominion. That Christianity *alone* led to a scientific exploitation of nature is historically inaccurate, for other cultures apart from a Christian influence have caused environmental harm. Steven Bouma-Prediger’s apologetic response to this argument begins with White’s premise. “The precise role of Christian theology in the rise of modern science is a complex question admitting of no simple answer. And so another of White’s premises is, at the very least, questionable.”<sup>29</sup> Yes, science and technology are factors for environmental degradation, but as previously stated one must also consider other factors including economics and a Western culture of greed, materialism, and consumerism.

It is important for the children of God to care for creation since it is both a command of God and an apologetic witness to the world. If believers care for creation in obedience to God, a dialogue can begin with those outside the Church who share our environmental concern. Caring for creation is in fact a form of ‘culturally relevant evangelism’<sup>30</sup> and a testimony that ‘this is our Father’s World’ who is the Creator of it all.

## **VII. Conclusion: Caring for Creation and the Worship of God**

It may sound odd, but caring for the environment directly relates to worship. John Stott has said that it would be absurd to imagine that he who *created* the Earth then handed it over to us to *destroy* it. In a similar thought, Calvin B. DeWitt has said, “Mimicking the absurd prospect that Rembrandt-praising art critics might somehow find it acceptable to trample Rembrandt paintings while honoring Rembrandt’s name, some Creator-praising people now trample creation while proclaiming Christ’s name.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed the first point of the *Declaration* says “Because we worship and honor the Creator, we seek to cherish and care for the creation.”<sup>32</sup>

Worship and caring for creation are complementary: “Indeed, one cannot fully worship the Creator and at the same time destroy His creation, which was brought into being to glorify him. Worshiping the Creator and caring for creation is all part of loving God. They are mutually reinforcing activities. It is actually unbiblical to set one against the other.”<sup>33</sup> As previously mentioned, the goal is not a fix-it activism, but rather a care for the environment as an expression of true worship of the Creator. Relating worship and creation is really nothing new. Revelation 4 verse 11 says: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” In this passage God is worshipped as Creator. The familiar Doxology sung in many churches invites God’s creation to join praise and worship of God:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow  
 Praise Him all creatures here below  
 Praise Him above ye Heavenly hosts  
 Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

---

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Stephen Rand, "Love your neighbour as yourself," *Care of Creation*, 146.
- <sup>2</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 99.
- <sup>3</sup> Lynn White, "The historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis" *Care of Creation*, 41.
- <sup>4</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation*, 200.
- <sup>5</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 186.
- <sup>6</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation*, 169.
- <sup>7</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation*, 201.
- <sup>8</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation*, 202.
- <sup>9</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation*, 206.
- <sup>10</sup> R.J. Berry, "Rationale," *The Care of Creation*, 15.
- <sup>11</sup> [www.creationcare.org/responses/faq.php](http://www.creationcare.org/responses/faq.php)
- <sup>12</sup> Ghilleen T. Prance, "The Earth under threat," *Care of Creation*, 117-118.
- <sup>13</sup> [www.creationcare.org/resources/declaration.php](http://www.creationcare.org/resources/declaration.php)
- <sup>14</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 186.
- <sup>15</sup> Peter Harris, "A new look at old passages," *The Care of Creation*, 135.
- <sup>16</sup> John Stott, "Foreword," *The Care of Creation*, 8.
- <sup>17</sup> John Stott, "Foreword," *The Care of Creation*, 8.
- <sup>18</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 68.
- <sup>19</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 74.
- <sup>20</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 98.
- <sup>21</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 71.
- <sup>22</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 78.
- <sup>23</sup> Lynn White, "The historical roots of our ecological crisis," *The Care of Creation*, 40.
- <sup>24</sup> Lynn White, "The historical roots of our ecological crisis," *The Care of Creation*, 42.
- <sup>25</sup> Lynn White, "The historical roots of our ecological crisis," *The Care of Creation*, 37.
- <sup>26</sup> Lynn White, "The historical roots of our ecological crisis," *The Care of Creation*, 40.
- <sup>27</sup> Lynn White, "The historical roots of our ecological crisis," *The Care of Creation*, 38.
- <sup>28</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 72.
- <sup>29</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 78.
- <sup>30</sup> Stephen Rand, "Love your neighbour as yourself," *The Care of Creation*, 145.
- <sup>31</sup> Calvin B. DeWitt, "Creation's Environmental Challenge," *The Care of Creation*, 64.
- <sup>32</sup> [www.creationcare.org/responses/faq.php](http://www.creationcare.org/responses/faq.php)
- <sup>33</sup> [www.creationcare.org/responses/faq.php](http://www.creationcare.org/responses/faq.php)

## **Bibliography**

Bouma-Prediger, Steven. For the Beauty of the Earth. Michigan: Baker Books, 2003.

“The challenge ahead is to persuade Christians that care for the earth is an integral feature of authentic Christian discipleship” (135). His text begins with a quote from Thomas Aquinas: “Any error about creation also leads to an error about God.” Central to this text is the bold claim that authentic Christian faith requires ecological obedience. To care for the earth is integral to Christian faith. Chapters include: Where are We? An ecological perception of place. What’s wrong with the world? The Groaning of Creation. Is Christianity to blame? The Ecological complaint against Christianity. Biblical wisdom and Ecological Vision, etc.

The Care of Creation. Edited by R.J. Berry, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

This is an excellent resource that contains the complete *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation*. This collection of articles explores the context in which the *Declaration* was created – including the 1966 article by Lynn White which faults Christian theology as the one of “the historical roots of our ecological crisis.” There is also an article which responds to the criticisms brought against the *Declaration*. The final section contains commentary on the *Declaration* from theologians and scientists. Contributors include: R.J. Berry, Calvin B. DeWitt, Alister McGrath, Jürgen Moltmann, and Ron Sider. The foreword to this book is written by John Stott.

Runyon, Theodore. The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology for Today. Nashville, Abingdon: 1998.

In his opening chapter, Runyon makes the claim that “The renewal of the creation and the creatures through the renewal in humanity of the *image of God* is what Wesley identifies as the very heart of Christianity” His book traces this theme through the works of Wesley and the author identifies implications of this theology for today.

[www.creationcare.org](http://www.creationcare.org)

This is an excellent web-site with the complete *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation*. The site is hosted by the *Evangelical Environmental Network*, a ministry “...whose purpose is to "declare the Lordship of Christ over all creation" (Col. 1:15-20).” Also on the site are fact sheets, resources for environmental small groups, and material for a congregation to host a “Creation Sunday.”

## Appendix

### An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation

*The Earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof - Psalm 24:1*

As followers of Jesus Christ, committed to the full authority of the Scriptures, and aware of the ways we have degraded creation, we believe that biblical faith is essential to the solution of our ecological problems.

**Because** we worship and honor the Creator, we seek to cherish and care for the creation.

**Because** we have sinned, we have failed in our stewardship of creation. Therefore we repent of the way we have polluted, distorted, or destroyed so much of the Creator's work.

**Because** in Christ God has healed our alienation from God and extended to us the first fruits of the reconciliation of all things, we commit ourselves to working in the power of the Holy Spirit to share the Good News of Christ in word and deed, to work for the reconciliation of all people in Christ, and to extend Christ's healing to suffering creation.

**Because** we await the time when even the groaning creation will be restored to wholeness, we commit ourselves to work vigorously to protect and heal that creation for the honor and glory of the Creator---whom we know dimly through creation, but meet fully through Scripture and in Christ. We and our children face a growing crisis in the health of the creation in which we are embedded, and through which, by God's grace, we are sustained. Yet we continue to degrade that creation.

**These** degradations of creation can be summed up as 1) land degradation; 2) deforestation; 3) species extinction; 4) water degradation; 5) global toxification; 6) the alteration of atmosphere; 7) human and cultural degradation.

**Many** of these degradations are signs that we are pressing against the finite limits God has set for creation. With continued population growth, these degradations will become more severe. Our responsibility is not only to bear and nurture children, but to nurture their home on earth. We respect the institution of marriage as the way God has given to insure thoughtful procreation of children and their nurture to the glory of God.

**We** recognize that human poverty is both a cause and a consequence of environmental degradation.

Many concerned people, convinced that environmental problems are more spiritual than technological, are exploring the world's ideologies and religions in search of non-Christian spiritual resources for the healing of the earth. As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that the Bible calls us to respond in four ways:

**First**, God calls us to confess and repent of attitudes which devalue creation, and which twist or ignore biblical revelation to support our misuse of it. Forgetting that "the earth is the Lord's," we have often simply used creation and forgotten our responsibility to care for it.

**Second**, our actions and attitudes toward the earth need to proceed from the center of our faith, and be rooted in the fullness of God's revelation in Christ and the Scriptures. We resist both ideologies which would presume the Gospel has nothing to do with the care of non-human creation and also ideologies which would reduce the Gospel to nothing more than the care of that creation.

**Third**, we seek carefully to learn all that the Bible tells us about the Creator, creation, and the human task. In our life and words we declare that full good news for all creation which is still waiting "with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God," (Rom. 8:19).

**Fourth**, we seek to understand what creation reveals about God's divinity, sustaining presence, and everlasting power, and what creation teaches us of its God-given order and the principles by which it works.

Thus we call on all those who are committed to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to affirm the following principles of biblical faith, and to seek ways of living out these principles in our personal lives, our churches, and society.

**The cosmos**, in all its beauty, wildness, and life-giving bounty, is the work of our personal and loving Creator.

**Our creating God** is prior to and other than creation, yet intimately involved with it, upholding each thing in its freedom, and all things in relationships of intricate complexity. God is transcendent, while lovingly sustaining each creature; and immanent, while wholly other than creation and not to be confused with it.

**God the Creator** is relational in very nature, revealed as three persons in One. Likewise, the creation which God intended is a symphony of individual creatures in harmonious relationship.

**The Creator's** concern is for all creatures. God declares all creation "good" (Gen. 1:31); promises care in a covenant with all creatures (Gen. 9:9-17); delights in creatures which have no human apparent usefulness (Job 39-41); and wills, in Christ, "to reconcile all things to himself" (Col.1:20).

**Men, women, and children**, have a unique responsibility to the Creator; at the same time we are creatures, shaped by the same processes and embedded in the same systems of physical, chemical, and biological interconnections which sustain other creatures.

**Men, women, and children**, created in God's image, also have a unique responsibility for creation. Our actions should both sustain creation's fruitfulness and preserve creation's powerful testimony to its Creator.

**Our God-given**, stewardly talents have often been warped from their intended purpose: that we know, name, keep and delight in God's creatures; that we nourish civilization in love, creativity and obedience to God; and that we offer creation and civilization back in praise to the Creator. We have ignored our creaturely limits and have used the earth with greed, rather than care.

**The earthly result** of human sin has been a perverted stewardship, a patchwork of garden and wasteland in which the waste is increasing. "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land...Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away" (Hosea 4:1,3). Thus, one consequence of our misuse of the earth is an unjust denial of God's created bounty to other human beings, both now and in the future.

**God's purpose in Christ** is to heal and bring to wholeness not only persons but the entire created order. "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross" (Col. 1:19-20).

**In Jesus Christ**, believers are forgiven, transformed and brought into God's kingdom. "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (II Cor. 5:17). The presence of the kingdom of God is marked not only by renewed fellowship with God, but also by renewed harmony and justice between people, and by renewed harmony and justice between people and the rest of the created world. "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Isa. 55:12).

**We believe** that in Christ there is hope, not only for men, women and children, but also for the rest of creation which is suffering from the consequences of human sin.

**Therefore** we call upon all Christians to reaffirm that all creation is God's; that God created it good; and that God is renewing it in Christ.

**We encourage deeper reflection** on the substantial biblical and theological teaching which speaks of God's work of redemption in terms of the renewal and completion of God's purpose in creation.

**We seek a deeper reflection** on the wonders of God's creation and the principles by which creation works. We also urge a careful consideration of how our corporate and individual actions respect and comply with God's ordinances for creation.

**We encourage Christians** to incorporate the extravagant creativity of God into their lives by increasing the nurturing role of beauty and the arts in their personal, ecclesiastical, and social patterns.

**We urge** individual Christians and churches to be centers of creation's care and renewal, both delighting in creation as God's gift, and enjoying it as God's provision, in ways which sustain and heal the damaged fabric of the creation which God has entrusted to us.

**We recall Jesus' words** that our lives do not consist in the abundance of our possessions, and therefore we urge followers of Jesus to resist the allure of wastefulness and overconsumption by making personal lifestyle choices that express humility, forbearance, self restraint and frugality.

**We call on all Christians** to work for godly, just, and sustainable economies which reflect God's sovereign economy and enable men, women and children to flourish along with all the diversity of creation. We recognize that poverty forces people to degrade creation in order to survive; therefore we support the development of just, free economies which empower the poor and create abundance without diminishing creation's bounty.

**We commit ourselves** to work for responsible public policies which embody the principles of biblical stewardship of creation.

**We invite** Christians--individuals, congregations and organizations--to join with us in this evangelical declaration on the environment, becoming a covenant people in an ever-widening circle of biblical care for creation.

**We call upon Christians** to listen to and work with all those who are concerned about the healing of creation, with an eagerness both to learn from them and also to share with them our conviction that the God whom all people sense in creation (Acts 17:27) is known fully only in the Word made flesh in Christ the living God who made and sustains all things.

**We make this declaration** knowing that until Christ returns to reconcile all things, we are called to be faithful stewards of God's good garden, our earthly home.

**For more information:**

Evangelical Environmental Network  
4485 Tench Road Suite 850  
Suwanee, GA 30024  
een@creationcare.org