

# Conservative Evangelicalism and the Environment: An Ethnographic Study

This thesis is submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Chester for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Christopher James Crosby.

November, 2016.

© 2016 - Christopher James Crosby.

All rights reserved.

## DECLARATION PAGE

---

---

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

## ABSTRACT

---

Conservative evangelicalism and the environment: an ethnographic study, by Christopher James Crosby

While there has been a long running debate concerning the relationship between the Christian faith and environmental attitudes and behaviours, the topic has been neglected empirically, especially in relation to qualitative research. This thesis addresses this gap and presents the results of fieldwork that included participant observation and forty in-depth qualitative interviews. The goal of this thesis is to present findings about the environmental attitudes and behaviours of four conservative evangelical congregations in North Wales, U.K., to further understanding about how Christian beliefs and interpretation of the Bible are formative in this process. To aid in this a modified 'four voices of theology' of Cameron *et al.* (2010) is used as an analytical template and to conceptualise results.

This thesis demonstrates that the development of environmental attitudes by a Christian group is far more complex than had previously been thought and adds to current understanding in several ways. Firstly, with the positive ways in which conservative evangelicals *do* value and experience creation: as responses of interviewees give a vivid picture of how appreciation of creation is closely linked to Christian identity. Secondly, this thesis shows how Biblical interpretation informs complex and diverse theological responses to the environment. Here four interrelated doctrines are evident which include: the Fall; dominion and regeneration; evangelism and the gospel; and eschatology. This thesis provides greater evidence and a more detailed analysis of how these doctrines, in addition to God's sovereignty, anthropocentrism, attitudes toward secular environmentalism and differences between individual and corporate engagement can affect environmental concern amongst those congregations I studied. In these four congregations I also uncovered other areas that can lead to engagement with environmental concern, such as obedience to environmental legislation and a desire to live less materialistic lifestyles. This thesis moves understanding beyond the limitations of previous quantitative empirical research that homogenised conservative evangelicals as having poor levels of environmental concern without offering a detailed analysis of causal mechanisms involved. This thesis also furthers understanding of the differences between biblical and secular world-views in informing environmental attitudes and challenges the overriding negative dissonance given to anthropocentrism in White's (1967) thesis. Finally, this thesis has shown the need for a modification to the structure of the four voices of theology of Cameron *et al.* (2010), when used in a conservative evangelical context. In detailing the interrelationships involved between formal, normative, espoused and operant theology, this thesis also offers further insights in the broader field of practical theology.

## ABBREVIATIONS

---

AECW	Associating Evangelical Churches of Wales
BSA	British Social Attitudes (survey)
CC	Christopher Crosby (annotated as interviewer)
CH1	Church 1 (one of the four churches attended for fieldwork)
CH2	Church 2
CH3	Church 3
CH4	Church 4
CH:INT	CH followed by the church number and INT followed by the number of the interview, refers to one of the interviews conducted during fieldwork, from one of the four churches. For example, CH2:INT5 or CH1:INT3.
CH:SERM	CH followed by the church number and SERM followed by the number of the sermon, refers to one of the sermons attended during fieldwork, from one of the four churches. For example, CH1:SERM3 or CH4:SERM7.
C of E	Church of England
CPRW	Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
DDT	Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane
DSP	Dominant Social Paradigm
EMW	Evangelical Movement of Wales
ESV	English Standard Version
FIEC	Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches
GM	Genetically Modified
GSS	General Social Survey
ISSP	International Social Survey Programme

KJV	King James Version
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
NEP	New Environmental Paradigm
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church of the United States
RESP	Respondent
R.C.	Roman Catholic
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
TAR	Theological Action Research
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States
WCC	World Council of Churches
WT	Woodland Trust
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

---

Declaration page.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Abbreviations.....	iv
List of Figures.....	xi
List of Tables.....	xii
Acknowledgements.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: EMPIRICAL STUDIES ADDRESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN.....	8
2:1 Introduction.....	8
2:2 Background to the Empirical Studies.....	10
2:3 Overview of the Empirical Studies.....	13
2:3:1 Geographical Location.....	14
2:3:2 Temporal Distribution.....	15
2:3:3 Target Groups.....	17
2:4 Measures of Religiosity and Environmental Concern.....	18
2:4:1 How has Religiosity been Operationalised?.....	19
2:4:2 How are Environmental Attitudes and Behaviour Operationalised?.....	24
2:5 Results of Studies in Relation to the White Thesis and Denominational Differences ...	30
2:5:1 The Four Waves of Empirical Studies.....	30
2:5:2 The Secular Nature of Environmentalism.....	32
2:5:3 Denominational Differences within the Christian Tradition.....	34
2:5:4 Causes of Denominational and Christian/non-Christian Differences.....	36
2:6 Conservative Evangelical Christianity or Fundamentalism.....	37
2:6:1 The Conservative Evangelical Tradition.....	37
2:6:2 Human Supremacy over Nature.....	38

2:6:3 Eschatology.....	39
2:6:4 Secular Versus Christian Culture Wars .....	40
2:6:5 The Science/Religion Debate.....	41
2:7 Limitations of Previous Quantitative Studies and the Need for Further Research.....	43
2:7:1 A Lack of Previous Research Focusing Upon the U.K. ....	43
2:7:2 General Limitations of Previous Research.....	46
2:7:3 The Importance of Social Setting, Context and its Fluidity .....	47
2:7:4 Methodological Shortcomings and the Need for an Ethnographic Study.....	49
2:8 Previous Research Assessing the Relationship Between Christianity and the Environment using Qualitative Methods .....	50
2:8:1 Introduction.....	50
2:8:2 Auto-ethnography .....	51
2:8:3 Discourse Analysis .....	54
2:8:4:1 Focus Groups with U.S. Evangelicals .....	58
2:8:4:2 Focus Groups with British Anglicans .....	60
2:9 Conclusion .....	61
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS.....	63
3:1 Introduction: the Foreshadowed Problem.....	63
3:2 The Ethnographic Methodology.....	64
3:3 Engaging with Churches .....	70
3:3:1 Background to Conservative Evangelicalism in Wales .....	70
3:3:2 Situating myself as a Researcher.....	73
3:3:3 Gaining Access: Gatekeepers and Sponsors.....	74
3:4 Being a Respectful Cultural Ethnographer .....	78
3:4:1 Preparedness for the Field .....	78
3:4:2 Accepting Others' Opinions.....	79
3:4:3 Conforming to Acceptable Doctrines and Practices.....	79
3:4:4 Using Acceptable Terminology.....	80



3:5 Data Collection .....	80
3:5:1 Experiences Within Churches .....	80
3:5:2 Conducting Interviews.....	83
3:5:3 Demographical information for interviewees .....	89
3:6 Conclusion .....	93
CHAPTER 4: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DATA ANALYSIS.....	94
4:1 The Four Voices of Theology .....	94
4:2 Theological Reflection in Context.....	95
4:3 Theoretical Underpinning: The Liberal Starting Point.....	97
4:4 The Four Voices of Theology: Previous uses in Academia .....	99
4:5 The Four Voices of Theology and the Conservative Evangelical Context .....	103
4:5:1 A Conservative Evangelical Articulation of Normative Theology .....	103
4:5:2 A Conservative Evangelical Articulation of Espoused Theology .....	109
4:5:3 A Conservative Evangelical Articulation of Operant Theology .....	110
4:5:4 A Conservative Evangelical Articulation of Formal Theology .....	112
4:6 Dynamics Between the Four Voices.....	115
4:7 Towards a Modified Four Voice Model of Theological Reflection .....	116
CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF DATA PART 1, EXPERIENCING CREATION.....	119
5:1 Introduction.....	119
5:2 The Place of Conversion .....	120
5:3 Conservative Evangelicals' Positive Appreciation of Creation .....	126
5:4 Creation Leading to Thanksgiving and Praise.....	133
5:5 Creation as Therapeutic and Preferences for Rural Over Urban Areas .....	135
5:6 Conclusion .....	140
CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION OF DATA PART 2, INCORPORATING DOCTRINES.....	145
6:1 Introduction.....	145
6:2 The Fall: Creation and the Effects of Sin .....	145
6:3 The Dominion Mandate, Stewardship and Regeneration.....	149

6:4 The Gospel: Evangelism and Creation.....	154
6:5 Last Things: Eschatology and Creation.....	161
6:6 God’s Sovereignty and Creation.....	167
6:7 To Steward Creation whilst Being Deeply Anthropocentric.....	169
6:8 To Steward Creation whilst Fearing Environmentalism.....	176
6:9 Individual Engagement Versus Corporate Disengagement.....	184
6:10 Conclusion.....	189
<b>CHAPTER 7: PRESENTATION OF DATA PART 3, ENGAGING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES</b>	<b>195</b>
7:1 Introduction.....	195
7:2 Lifestyles and the Environment.....	196
7:3 Evangelicals and General Environmental Problems.....	202
7:4 Evangelicals and Species Extinctions.....	211
7:5 Evangelicals and Climate Change.....	215
7:6 Evangelicals and Renewable Energy.....	219
7:7 What does it mean to Love God? The Nature of Evangelical Burdens.....	222
7:8 Citizens as well as Christians: Adherence to Environmental Laws.....	227
7:9 Demographic and Biographic Variables as Predictors of Environmental Concern.....	229
7:10 Conclusion.....	231
<b>CHAPTER 8: CONTEXTUALISING THE DATA.....</b>	<b>236</b>
8:1 Introduction: Evangelicals in Dialogue.....	236
8:2 Dialogue with Previous Quantitative Empirical Studies.....	236
8:3 Dialogue with Previous Qualitative Empirical Studies.....	255
8:4 Conclusion.....	265
<b>CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>268</b>
9:1 Thesis Summary.....	268
9:2 Significance of Contribution.....	269
9:3 Implications.....	276
9:4 Recommendations for Further Research.....	279

9:5 Prospects for the Future .....	281
9:6 Conclusion .....	286
APPENDICES .....	288
Appendix 1) The Thirty-Seven Quantitative Empirical Studies Forming the Synthesis in Chapter 2 .....	288
Appendix 2) Participant Information Sheet .....	289
Appendix 3) Consent Form.....	292
Appendix 4) Interview Format .....	293
REFERENCES.....	294

---

---

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

Figure 1: Demographic Variables with Positive Influence upon Environmental Concern .....	11
Figure 2: Geographical Focus of Empirical Research by Country.....	15
Figure 3: Temporal Location of Empirical Studies by Year of Publication and Year of Data Collection	16
Figure 4: Target Groups of Data used in Empirical Studies.....	18
Figure 5: How Religiosity is Operationalised.....	20
Figure 6: Number of Religiosity Measures used from the Categories in Figure 5 .....	21
Figure 7: How Environmental Concern is Operationalised .....	25
Figure 8: Number of Environmental Measures used from the Categories in Figure 7.....	30
Figure 9: The ‘Four Waves’ of Empirical Studies Addressing the Christianity and Environment Relationship .....	32
Figure 10: Religious Identification of General Public and Environmental Group Members.....	33
Figure 11: Support for the Environment by Denomination.....	34
Figure 12: Negative/Positive Correlations between Religion and Environmental Concern by Denomination Group .....	36
Figure 13: Location of AECW and other Conservative Evangelical Churches in North Wales .....	76
Figure 14: The Four Voices of Theology.....	95
Figure 15: The Linear and Hierarchical Four Voice Model of Theological Reflection .....	117
Figure 16: Evangelical Attitudes Toward Species Extinctions.....	212
Figure 17: Evangelical Attitudes Toward Climate Change .....	216
Figure 18: Evangelical Attitudes Toward Wind Farms .....	220
Figure 19: Evangelical Burdens .....	222
Figure 20: Eschatology and Ecology, Experiences of the Korean Church .....	251

## LIST OF TABLES

---

Table 1: Obstacles to Faith Based Environmental Concern .....	52
Table 2: Opportunities for Faith Based Environmental Concern .....	53
Table 3: Christian Narratives on Climate Change: Conservational Stewardship .....	55
Table 4: Christian Narratives on Climate Change: Developmental Stewardship.....	56
Table 5: Christian Narratives on Climate Change: Developmental Preservation .....	57
Table 6: The Role of Gatekeepers .....	77
Table 7: The Role of Sponsors.....	77
Table 8: Interviewee Characteristics.....	90
Table 9: The Theology of the Relationship between Evangelicals and Animals .....	174
Table 10: Reasons for Negative Attitudes toward Environmentalism from Evangelicals .....	177
Table 11: Evangelicals and Environmental Stewardship Organisations .....	181
Table 12: Positive Environmental Lifestyle Choices Amongst Evangelicals .....	196
Table 13: Environmental Problems discussed by Evangelicals .....	203
Table 14: Evangelical Attitudes toward Losses in Biological Diversity (1) .....	213
Table 15: Evangelical Attitudes toward Losses in Biological Diversity (2) .....	214
Table 16: Evangelical Attitudes toward Climate Change (1).....	216
Table 17: Evangelical Attitudes toward Climate Change (2).....	218
Table 18: Examples of Changing Attitudes During Interviews.....	225
Table 19: In Dialogue with Claims of Quantitative Empirical Studies.....	242

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

In many ways this project is not just the work of four years, but a far longer process of learning and development. The list of people to thank who have been instrumental in this would be far too long to include in this summary. However, I would like to mention Dr Alan Warburton of the University of Lancaster for overseeing part of my historical research for my BA and Claire Appleby, of the Open University, who supervised my MA dissertation.

Thanks to my principal supervisor Prof. David Clough and broader supervisory team, Prof. Chris Baker and Dr Wayne Morris. Also to the University of Chester's Department of Theology and Religious Studies, fellow students, the universities library and IT staff and my proof-reader Dr John McKeown.

I would like to thank the people who took part in the study via formal interviews, for their willingness to offer time, to be open, to see me as trustworthy, and to be thoughtful in their responses. I would like to thank all the church leaders and members from the four churches that I had placements at.

I would also like to thank Rev. Joe Nicholson and Rev. Federico Padilla, who provided spiritual refreshment, teaching, encouragement and support. With regards to family I would like to especially thank my parents Frances and William (Bill) for providing support throughout my previous studies. Their life example, although not academic, of 'how things can be achieved through hard work', has no doubt resulted in my own work ethic which was needed to complete a protracted thesis. More broadly I would like to thank both the extended Crosby and Tique/Organista sides of our family, who have helped in various ways.

This project would never have succeeded without the sacrificial support and love of my wife Joan (Joanne), whose willingness to work hard on other things so I had more time for research was greatly appreciated. In many ways the completion of a PhD by one partner in a marriage is somewhat misleading as projects could better be described as a joint or family effort. The birth of our first son 'Ishi' at the end of my second year brought us much joy and his sparkle and light continue to inspire us. The birth of our second son 'Ammiel' in the closing phases of my write up acted as an encouragement to finish the project to enable more time for family, as well as further evidence of God the Creator. It is my hope that the world they grow up in will be cared for. Most importantly I would like to thank God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for making all things possible, for guiding and sustaining me.

*For my Mum and Dad, Frances and William (Bill)*

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

---

Since the publication of Lynn White's (1967) article<sup>1</sup> almost half a century ago, which condemned the West's Christian heritage for having a deleterious impact upon the environment, a largely theoretical or non-empirical, what one might call 'theological' debate, has ensued as to the effects the Christian faith may or may not have upon the non-human environment. This debate is one of the most theorised areas in Christian theology, yet has received a paucity of empirical attention, and no previous detailed ethnographic study.

A vast amount of material is available from non-empirical studies as theologians have debated how the Bible might be formative in leading to certain beliefs in relation to the environment. Specifically, eco-theologians have produced a regular stream of material claiming the Bible has a great deal to offer in promoting a sensitive environmental stewardship, often focusing upon texts or themes which are deemed to have the most potential or positive meaning. In these ways a great deal of progress has been made since White's publication, in helping to understand more deeply the Bible's practical influence and potential.<sup>2</sup> However, sometimes eco-theology attempts to exegetically stretch the meaning of Scriptures to promote a care for the earth whilst often ignoring those texts that do not 'fit in' with the desired picture of a more environmentally friendly faith.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> White's thesis, despite only being a few pages long, gained a legendary status in the Christianity/Environment debate, leading to a still unresolved controversy. White argued that the anthropocentrism permeating Western society was due to the Genesis injunction for man to have dominion over and to subdue the earth, and that this coupled with science and technology, resulted in our ecological crisis. The lack in his thesis of a detailed investigation of possible other theologically important precursors to environmental attitudes and behaviours has resulted in something of a discrepancy between the spark created by his basic essay and the decades of more detailed debate that ensued. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (1988) provides a summary of the first two decades of debate surrounding the White thesis and criticisms of it. For an early discussion of White's thesis, how others engaged with the topic, criticisms of White's arguments, and how the thesis was open to being misused, see Thomas Derr (1975).

<sup>2</sup> David Horrell (2010) provides a substantial bibliography of this literature. Recent edited volumes have the benefit of incorporating a variety of different positions and themes from various authors, commonly with an ecumenical approach, and such studies have become more precisely focused and argumentatively sophisticated over time. For instance see: a focus upon ecological hermeneutics, from Horrell, Hunt, Southgate and Stavropoulou (2010); theological engagement with science and philosophy in relation to dominion, from Van Houtan and Northcott (2010), and specifically in relation to animals, from Deane-Drummond and Clough (2009). For an up-to-date focus upon climate change, see Northcott and Scott (2014).

<sup>3</sup> A comprehensive overview of the various ways in which the Bible has been used by eco-theologians can be seen in Horrell (2010; Chapters 2-9).



The *Earth Bible*, an international project based at Adelaide University, which resulted in the publication of five edited volumes, set out with the premise that biblical texts and their interpreters, being highly anthropocentric, suppress the care of, or voice of the 'earth', and therefore tested the Bible against a set of eco-justice principles<sup>4</sup> (Habel, 2000, 2001; Habel and Wurst, 2000, 2001; Habel and Balabanski, 2002). In light of this scrutiny the Bible was deemed to 'fall short' in relation to adequate ecological principles and as needing to be read with a specific 'lens' for it to be able to promote environmental sensitivity. However, other projects have tackled the debate from alternative perspectives and claimed different conclusions. In 2008 the *Green Bible* was published. Just as 'red letter Bibles' highlight sections of Scripture spoken by Jesus in red ink to stand out, the *Green Bible* has certain portions of its text written in green to highlight sections of the Bible that were deemed to have some 'green' meaning in relation to the environment. With contributions from Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the *Green Bible* claims on its back cover that over 1000 passages about 'creation care' (a Christian term for environmental stewardship) have been identified and are therefore highlighted in green (*Green Bible*, 2008). This would represent something of a remarkable contrast to White's earlier accusations, and the differences between the *Earth Bible* and the *Green Bible* leave an unresolved question as to how exactly the Christian faith affects environmental concern.

Given these examples what is evident is the need for a more detailed investigation that can draw upon empirical evidence. The main focus of my thesis addresses the question as to whether biblical interpretation and a practised Christian faith, by a specific constituent of conservative evangelical Christians, either leads to a caring approach to the environment or whether theological engagement with the Bible negatively impinges upon a human being's concern for non-human creation. Furthermore, my thesis will show how this demarcation is far too simplistic when dealing with a complex issue with multiple drives.

As the thesis progresses I will also provide a clearer understanding of terms such as environmental care or sensitivity and positive or negative environmental attitudes and behaviours. I am aware at the outset that such terms can be heavily value-laden, informed by various world-views,<sup>5</sup> and therefore have different indicators and meanings for different people or groups. For

---

<sup>4</sup> An overview of the Earth Bible project can be seen on Flinders University website. See <http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/theology/ctsc/projects/earthbible/> (Accessed: 14/7/2014). For a more authoritative and critical review see Conradie (2004).

<sup>5</sup> Derived from the German word *Weltanschauung*, a world-view is defined as a comprehensive view of human life and the universe.

example, what could be termed as ‘environmentally sensitive’ for some, could equally be termed ‘unethical’ for others, rather than a guiding principle for human behaviour. For instance, previous empirical work tends to start off from the premise that a highly defined notion of environmental care (in many ways amounting to a paradigmatic shift in values) is a common good that all groups should aim for.

Despite the large amount of theoretical material available as theologians have mulled over the topic of Christianity and the environment, empirical engagement with the issue has been seriously neglected. The literature review conducted for this project in Chapter 2 shows how previous empirical research focused upon analysing the effects of Christian theology on environmental concern has overwhelmingly been based upon quantitative statistical surveys. These are largely from data collected in the U.S. for general social surveys, many of which have been published in short journal articles.<sup>6</sup> These articles, having a heavily North American bias, often rely on old data sets that often do not fit comfortably with the researcher’s own research questions (in using material from general social surveys that authors of the articles did not themselves design) and although trying to find statistical relationships, even when these are noticed, they do not seriously account for them with detailed reasoning, as their authors were not in a position to go and ask why such correlations were evident. When deciding on the focus for my own research, I chose data collection methods that incorporated first-hand observation and questioning, to try and understand the attitudes and behaviours that a certain group of Christian people might have in relation to the environment, and to address a large gap that exists within the literature. If we take the analogy of the scientific ‘black box’,<sup>7</sup> whereby inputs and outputs can be seen but the internal workings and mechanisms are hidden, then the non-empirical work discussing the Christianity and environment topic deliberates and imagines what might be inside the black box, or what an author thinks should be inside the black box. Whereas the quantitative empirical work, in statistically testing variables, tends to bounce ideas off the black box, though again without really knowing what is inside, what those causal mechanisms are, in any detail. With inputs to the black box being questions asked of different Christian groups and denominations and non-Christian groups, and outputs being answers revealing levels of environmental concern, findings point to more conservatively evangelical (or what they label ‘fundamentalist’) Christians as scoring below other Christian denominations and broader society with regards to environmental attitudes. Dealing with statistical results, the studies fail to back up the reasons they offer with evidence, such as quotations from members of the Christian

---

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1 for a list of these articles and Chapter 2 for a detailed synthesis of them.

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed overview of the theory see Mario Bunge (1963) ‘A General Black Box Theory’.

groups they mention, or their observation, as they do not engage in this way. They therefore lack specific knowledge of the lifestyles of those they are studying and are in effect unable to open the black box. Perhaps one of their greatest drawbacks is that they are totally silent about how the groups they study may positively value the environment, focusing solely upon what they deem to be negative influences. My own ethnographic study has provided original material to fill this gap in knowledge.

The topic of Christianity and the environment is an under-researched area that has been controversial and yet is significant and of contemporary importance,<sup>8</sup> therefore warranting more detailed investigation. Particularly, to provide answers that can help us understand the backdrop of things that can either lead to a flourishing planet and people or a degraded environment and human suffering. It would be difficult to argue against the importance of such an endeavour, although I am aware that such goals can have different drives, meanings and application for different people. This thesis, in conducting effective and detailed research, has enabled a deeper understanding to be gained of conservative evangelicals and creation or the environment, as I detail in the following chapters. For the first time, via a detailed ethnographic study, I have opened the 'black box' to reveal how the interpretation and application of the Bible, by a constituent of conservative evangelical Christians, influences their environmental attitudes and behaviours. Thus I am providing a distinct and original contribution to the topic and arguments sparked by White's thesis almost half a century ago.

This research entailed more than one year of fieldwork which included participant observation at two services per week at conservative evangelical churches in North Wales; collecting the hymns sung and sermons presented; and conducting 40 in-depth interviews with congregants and leaders. To define boundaries this thesis does not aim to engage with or create new eco-theology, nor argue for certain biblical interpretations, but will provide a comprehensive analysis of previous empirical work in detail before engaging on a more comprehensive empirical project, collecting fresh and novel data. It is not aimed at making a model of denominational diversity or comparison between faith groups and non-faith groups, but rather focuses upon a Christian group that sticks closely to, and places great authority on, biblical revelation. With this focus, I will attempt to reveal how and in what ways the Bible influences them. If White's argument is valid then this

---

<sup>8</sup> There is increasing consensus that environmental problems caused by human activities are one of the most difficult challenges facing societies at present and will continue to be so into the foreseeable future. Particularly in recent history, the degradation of creation has accelerated to a point not seen in previous times. For an overview of this historical imbalance see John McNeill (2000) and William Leiss (1998).

would be most evident amongst groups of Christians that have a rigid interpretation of the manual to their faith. Observation, interaction and detailed interviewing have the potential to deliver explicit evidence of great interest and academic value. Such things include how my target group negotiate and apply what they see as the Bible teaching in relation to environmental issues, of how they steer a path between their faith and the application of Scriptures thousands of years old and the contemporary culture they find themselves in, and what the obstacles and opportunities are that emerge from the living out of their faith, in relation to environmental stewardship.

Although this thesis is rooted in ethnography, by engaging with faith communities and reflecting upon the data collected, it is also practical theology. To aid in the analysis of data I therefore chose a means of theological reflection, the 'four voices of theology' of Cameron *et al.* (2010). After modifying the four voices theory to my own context, the framework enabled me to articulate and conceptualise my findings as well as allowing me to contribute to understanding how the model itself works and further refinements that it requires.

In this thesis the term 'conservative evangelical' is used to refer to the groups of Christians that have taken part in this study from the four churches I attended for fieldwork. This term was chosen as it represents Christians at the most conservative end of the evangelical spectrum and would be a label that most of those taking part would be happy with. It is also precise enough to distinguish this group from the more general term 'evangelical' which other groups with different beliefs may adhere to and also the term 'fundamentalist' which is often used in a derogatory way. Since the publication of J. I. Packer's *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* in 1958, stating clearly evangelical teaching, the boundaries of the term 'fundamentalism' have changed markedly. In other anthropological studies of conservative evangelicals there has also been an unwillingness for people to label themselves as fundamentalist despite agreeing with core fundamentalist beliefs (Malley, 2004, p.26). Although the term conservative evangelical is used in the main part of this thesis, the term 'fundamentalist' is still used in the literature review chapter when discussing those studies whose authors have used the term.

An overview of this thesis is now presented in the following chapter summaries. Chapter 1, has introduced the topic and shown how the research problem has historically unravelled, to a point that warranted a new and precise investigation using previously untapped research methods, to offer a deeper level of understanding than has previously been gained.

Chapter 2 presents and discusses the literature review conducted for this project. This provided an in-depth analytical synthesis of previous empirical literature that has attempted to

investigate the relationship between the Christian faith and environmental concern. The vast majority of this has been quantitative and therefore forms the main part of the chapter before the small number of previous qualitative studies are also analysed. It also shows the shortcoming of this body of research and provides the rationale for conducting an ethnographic project. The literature review confirmed that there has been no previous empirical ethnographic study of conservative evangelical views of the environment.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter 3 discusses the research questions or problems to be addressed and then considers the benefits of the ethnographic methodological tradition, specifically in justifying the chosen methodology for this project. From a review of the literature, effective criteria for improving the quality of this type of research are set out early in the thesis, in an attempt to add further authenticity to forthcoming chapters and anticipate potential pitfalls, before I detailed several aspects of what conducting the research entailed.

In Chapter 4 I present the analytical method which I use in the process of theological reflection upon my data, to aid in the conceptualisation of results. This is the 'four voices of theology' of Cameron *et al.* (2010). After justifying my choice of this model, I explain how the more liberal contexts in which it has been used previously, required me to make a modification of the model's structure, to be more suitable to the conservative evangelical context where higher levels of authority are given to Scripture.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the data that was collected, along major thematic lines, and then puts this data through an internal analysis, using the modified four voices model of theological reflection. In Chapter 5, a synthesis of interview data shows how my interviewees experience and value creation, or what the environment means to them personally. Included in this is the place of their religious 'conversion'; how creation is positively appreciated; how this is linked to thanksgiving to, and praise of, the Creator; the therapeutic properties of creation; and views about urban and rural areas.

Chapter 6 then moves from the realm of experience to that of doctrines. Here, four overarching themes are identified: the Fall and the effects of sin, dominion and regeneration, the evangelical gospel, and eschatology. The nature of these four themes, and the complex

---

<sup>9</sup> However, Susan Emmerich (2003) in her doctoral research did use ethnography specifically as a means to understand tensions and resolve conflict between members of environmental advocate groups and Methodist Christians in Chesapeake Bay, an estuary on the North-East coast of the United States (U.S.).

interrelationships involved, led me to term them the 'evangelical environmental quadrilateral',<sup>10</sup> and these are further tempered by notions of God's sovereignty, anthropocentrism, attitudes toward secular environmentalism and possible tensions between individual and corporate engagement with environmental issues.

Chapter 7 then focuses upon behaviours in relation to environmental issues. This includes sections about lifestyles and the environment (Table 12, p.196), and an overview of general environmental problems (Table 13, p.203), before focusing upon species extinctions (Figure 16, p.212, Tables 14 and 15, pp.213, 214), climate change (Figure 17, p.216, Tables 16 and 17, pp.216, 218) and renewable energy (Figure 18, p.220). Chapter 7 then places these levels of engagement in the context of broader evangelical 'burdens' (Figure 19, p.222) or those issues which gain greater resonance with my target group, and the potential for changed attitudes such as with increased awareness of interviewees and the role of legislation. Demographic and biographic variables are also looked at to see if any of these result in predictable patterns.

Chapter 8 contextualises the results of this research by placing it in dialogue with the results of the literature review conducted for Chapter 2. By comparing my own results with both previous quantitative and qualitative studies, I illuminate those areas where my own work contributes to the debate. This enables my own project to be placed within a fifth wave of empirical research focusing upon the relationship between Christianity and the environment. Comparisons of my own results to previous quantitative studies, and further understanding and original insights that have been gained are also presented in Table 19 (p.242).

Chapter 9 looks back, in providing an overview of the main results of this project and how it has added to current understanding on the topic. It solidifies findings which have been aided by using the four voices model of theological reflection and also confirms how using the modified model in this thesis has further contributed in understanding the internal workings of the model itself. Chapter 9 also looks forward to the potential for conservative evangelical engagement with creation stewardship in the future and offers suggestions for further research.

---

<sup>10</sup> The quadrilateral I identify here is in relation to the interpretation and application of four interrelated doctrines which affect environmental attitudes and should not be confused with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. It is also distinct from David Bebbington's quadrilateral of historical evangelical traits, which he identifies as conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism (Bebbington, 1989, p.3). It is, I contend, the negotiation of the four doctrines I identify, in addition to four other complicating factors, which result in certain attitudes toward the environment, as shall be seen in Chapters 6 and 7.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: EMPIRICAL STUDIES ADDRESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

---

### 2:1 INTRODUCTION

---

The growth of the modern environmental movement and broader societal concern for the natural world, although having a number of possible causes, was undoubtedly influenced by the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. In the half-century since then environmentalism has become a popular and established social discourse. Carson's book acted as a wakeup call to the unchecked and negligent effects of human intervention in the natural order. In particular it documented the destruction of wildlife and especially bird populations caused by the widespread use of pesticides, the consequences of which had not been thoroughly assessed. Areas of the U.S. that were once alive with the sound of birdsong witnessed a 'silent spring' as a direct result of the use of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), a chemical which has since been outlawed for agricultural purposes the world over.<sup>11</sup> The 1960s saw the environment established as a leading social issue and the first Earth Day took place in 1970 (Jones and Dunlap, 1992, p.29). One of the first theologians to offer serious consideration of the relationship between Christianity and the environment was Joseph Sittler, a Professor at Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary. He wrote as early as 1954 with his article 'Theology for Earth' investigating Christian ethics in relation to the natural environment. He would continue to have influence with future publications such as *The Care of the Earth and other University Sermons* (1964), and in fostering commitments between denominational members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and a deeper understanding of human effects upon broader creation (Sittler, 1962). The WCC formed a 'Faith-Man-Nature' group in 1964 to help develop a better theology of nature and in particular man in relation to the natural world (Harper, 2008, p.9).

With the backdrop of this burgeoning environmental concern appeared an article in the journal *Science* entitled 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis' by historian Lynn White Jr. (1967). Although neither an environmentalist nor a theologian himself, the accusatory nature of White's publication was to spark a great and long running debate between academics of both these

---

<sup>11</sup> Although Carson's book helped foster environmental concern, more recent debate over the legislative regulation of DDT has argued that repercussions such as the spread of Malaria (as DDT had previously been used to eradicate mosquitos) may have led to vast numbers of human deaths in subsequent years and therefore question the validity of Carson's arguments. Interestingly, evangelical interest groups such as the Cornwall Alliance have critiqued Carson's work and its ramifications.

disciplines. White presented an argument that the Judeo-Christian heritage of modern industrial Western society was responsible for the ecological crisis. Particularly, according to White, Genesis' injunction for mankind to have 'dominion over' and to 'subdue' the earth resulted in an anthropocentrism that permeated Western culture: something unparalleled amongst other religions and the world-views of traditional indigenous cultures (White, 1967, p.1205). As a result of this Judeo-Christian heritage, a human-nature dichotomy appeared and mankind saw little purpose for the natural environment other than to serve human needs.

It is not surprising that White's paper led to a period of vigorous debate with responses from both Christians and environmentalists. Although many from the former group accused and rebuffed White for what they saw as his attack on the Christian faith, the debate that emerged from his paper has led to a thorough analysis and reworking of ethics related to the environment within the Judeo-Christian tradition; with eco-theological concepts such as environmental stewardship and creation care representing scripturally rooted alternatives to mastery over nature themes. It is fair to note that this 'reworking of the faith' was called for by White himself at the end of his famous article (1967, p.1207): something which could more accurately label him as 'prophetic' rather than the traitor or anti-Christ that some commentators accused him of being.<sup>12</sup> The literature review in subsequent sections focuses upon the empirical research that engages and statistically tests White's thesis rather than the more widespread theological debate that ensued.

Social scientists may have been relatively slow in responding to White's thesis with empirical tests, as the first including both religious and environmental measures was conducted by Russell Weigel (1977) and the first focused in-depth study solely concentrating upon Christianity and the environment by Carl Hand and Kent Van Liere (1984). This debate now entered a period of rigorous and regular statistical analysis with survey data being used to manipulate various measures of religiosity and environmental concern and behaviour. Since 1984 there has been a steady stream of articles, with the early 1990s seeing the most frequent output (see 2:3:2 and Figure 3). However, it is

---

<sup>12</sup> It should also be noted that White's second essay 'Continuing the Conversation' (1973), offers more reasoning to his earlier essay, such as a more detailed look at value structures and how these affect political, economic and social structures, and the part played by religion and other ideologies as a cause of both problems and change. In this respect, White specifically clarifies that he does not see religion as the sole cause of ecological problems (pp.57-58) and furthermore that Western and Eastern Christianity led to two different value structures in relation to effects upon the environment (pp.58-60). He also points to how the exegesis of Scripture can be historically bound and that changes to interpretation can occur over time (such as with Christian attitudes toward slavery) (pp.60-61). However, he still very strongly equates Christian anthropocentrism with environmental degradation (pp.62-64). When concentrating specifically upon conservative evangelical Christians, I will challenge the simplicity of this causal link.



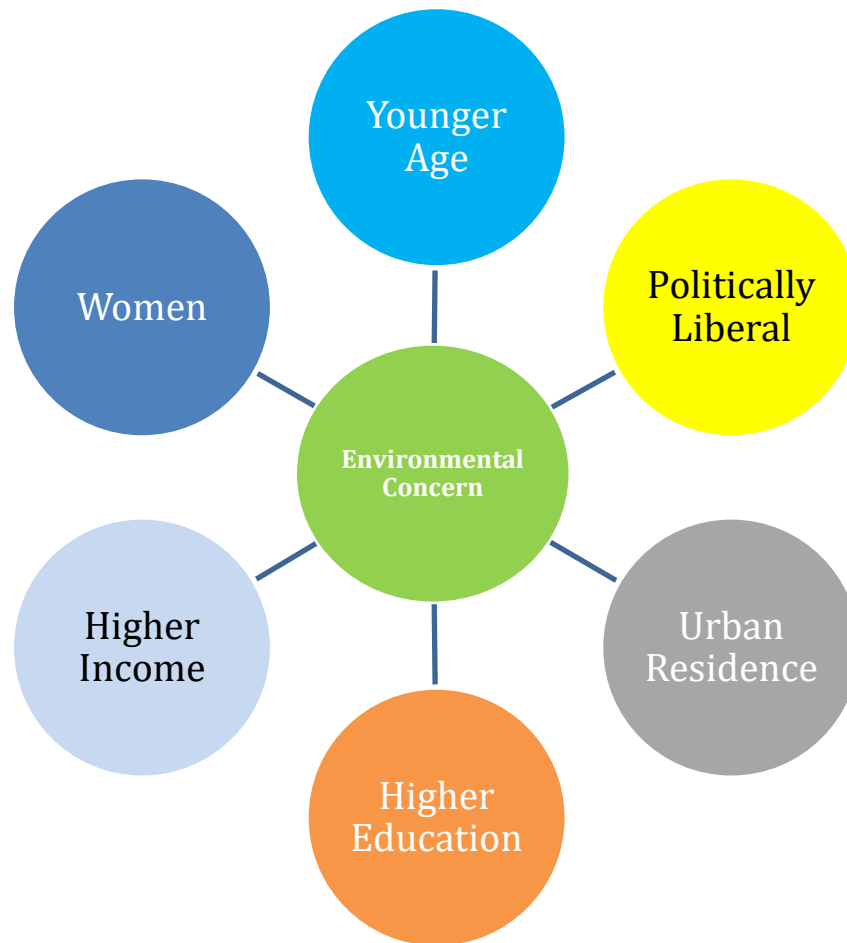
a complex and problematic task to empirically test the overly general nature of White's argument; and in particular whether his article explains the relationship between the Christian and nature at an individual level. Furthermore, concentrating on the dominion injunction of Genesis, or human dominance over nature, White also fails to acknowledge stewardship concepts, and his thesis tars all Christianity with the same burden of guilt; two issues that many of the later quantitative empirical studies address, as shall be seen in Chapter 2:4:2. In addition, White offers no understanding as to varieties of experience between different denominations, or within denominations: geographically, temporally, or individually. It is therefore difficult to either verify or falsify White's thesis, but rather what is needed is a far more detailed investigation. An analysis of previous quantitative empirical studies will offer deeper understanding of the relationship between Christianity and the natural environment, take stock of current knowledge, and indicate where future research could help illuminate the multifaceted and complex interface of the Christian faith and nature.

## 2:2 BACKGROUND TO THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

---

Early studies investigating predictors of environmental attitudes concentrated on testing social demographic variables via sample surveys. Kent Van Liere and Riley Dunlap (1980) provide an overview of those studies. In particular, age, gender, level of education, income, social status, rural/urban residency and political affiliation were all analysed before the question of religion entered the equation. Having a younger age, a higher level of education, higher income and occupational status, being of urban residence, and having a politically liberal outlook were all shown to be good predictors of pro-environmental attitudes (Figure 1, p.11). Results for gender have been less uniform, however some find a positive correlation for women and environmental concern (Van Liere and Dunlap, 1980, pp.189-92). Many of these demographic variables are also distinguished in the empirical research analysing religion/environment connections. It is important to be aware of them and many studies addressing the Christianity/environment link attempt to statistically control them via regression techniques. However, it has been suggested that when these demographic predictors are combined, they rarely account for more than 15% of the variability in the measures used: suggesting environmental concern has a wide base (Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.734).

FIGURE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES WITH POSITIVE INFLUENCE UPON ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN



Source: Data used to compile Figure 1 from Van Liere and Dunlap (1980, pp.189-192).

Commitments to society's dominant social, political and economic beliefs, have also been investigated as blocks to a pro-environmental stance, by Dunlap and Van Liere (1984). Issues such as materialism, individualism, economic growth, private property rights, and lack of government restraint in areas such as industry and trade, have all been seen as responsible for ecological decay, propounded by their being reinforced by the strong institutional bases of educational, economic, religious and political apparatus (Dunlap and Van Liere, 1984).

What emerges is the extent of the complexity surrounding the formation of environmental attitudes. In a study interviewing environmentalists, such as people working for environmental organisations, to ascertain what things they believed had been most important in shaping their outlook, Louise Chawla (1998) offered further understanding. The most important factors included

memorable childhood experiences in nature, exposure to the effects of environmental destruction, the influence of friends and family with environmental sensitivities such as a role model figure, education, and being influenced by an environmental organisation (Chawla 1998, cited in Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002, p.251). A strong theme interrelated with a number of the above was that individuals felt a strong emotional connection with the natural environment. It is clear that a complex web of inputs can influence people's values and beliefs in relation to the natural world. Add to the mix religion, one of the most powerful determinants of ideologically informed beliefs and actions (Zald, 2000, cited in Sherkat and Ellison, 2007, p.71).

As early as the 1960s, clear links were made between religious and political affiliation in the U.S. (Johnson, 1962, 1964). These early works explicated the relationship between frequency of attendance at church, the theologically conservative or liberal positioning of ministers, and voting patterns. Congregants in the U.S. who frequently attended churches with theologically conservative pastors voted Republican whilst those with frequent attendance at churches with theologically liberal pastors did not (Johnson, 1962, 1964).

The clear demarcation between Conservative and Liberal political preference in the U.S. is not so obvious in other Anglophone democracies. However, Benton Johnson's early work was important as many of the future studies testing the White thesis would do so from data collected in the U.S. In his next work 'Theology and the Position of Pastors on Public Issues' (1967), Johnson looked at the links between six different public issues, and the stance conservative and liberal pastors would take on them. He addressed a gap in research and showed how congregants were closely aligned with the view of their pastors. Johnson's work is interesting in that although he did not study environmental attitudes, the links between religion and politics that he found would remain a constant theme in future research addressing the religion and environment debate. Of the six social concerns he tested, the closest that could be related with environmental concern was 'foreign aid', and it is interesting to see that 96-97% of liberal pastors were in favour, but only 57% of conservatives (Johnson, 1967, p.436). This may be the earliest indicator available pointing to how denominations would respond differently in future decades to humanitarian issues in general, and specifically environmental concerns.

Liberal Protestantism (denominations such as Methodism) became synonymous with the 'social gospel movement', with active engagement in the world addressing economic and social issues, whilst conservative Protestants (such as Baptists) distanced themselves from this engagement. Conservative Protestants were more concerned with salvation, and less with concerns of the world. Subsequent work added further evidence, showing how Christians engaged in

community charity work came far more from Catholicism or Protestant denominations that are liberal rather than moderate or conservative (Wilson and Janoski, 1995). Therefore, Johnson (1967) broadly identified two possible theological positions that would again hold importance for subsequent academics trying to understand why people from different denominational backgrounds reacted differently to environmental concerns, such as conservatives being more sceptical and liberals being more engaging. Liberal Christian groups incorporated the environment into their remit as a social issue requiring attention in contrast to what future empirical research would deem the 'problem of fundamentalism' (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996).

### 2:3 OVERVIEW OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

---

A comprehensive literature review uncovered a total of 37 empirical studies that directly link measures of religion with environmental concern as their central focus or at least have a substantial section addressing this within a broader research goal. These form the basis of the review in the rest of this chapter. Some of the more recent studies included are more focused upon testing one specific issue rather than more generally addressing the White thesis, as did many earlier studies, by only identifying the extent to which dominion is characterised by 'human mastery over nature' orientations. Other empirical studies were deemed to have a peripheral importance and have therefore been used as background information or to offer additional understanding on a specific issue.

Religiosity and environmental concern have been operationalised by the selecting of questions and respondent answers before bivariate and/or multivariate statistical techniques are used to analyse the relationship between variables.<sup>13</sup> Regression is undertaken to various degrees by different researchers in attempts to control the demographic variables mentioned earlier. The compilation of a chart recording various details of the empirical work enabled the following thematic synthesis to emerge with the aid of graphical representation (Figures 2-9, and 12).

---

<sup>13</sup> Bivariate and multivariate analysis are statistical techniques used to investigate possible relationships between sets of data. Bivariate relates to two paired data sets whilst multivariate often examines several sets at the same time and can distinguish which data set has the most influence. There are detailed overviews of this type of quantitative empirical research (Pedhazur, 1982; Cohen and Cohen 1975).

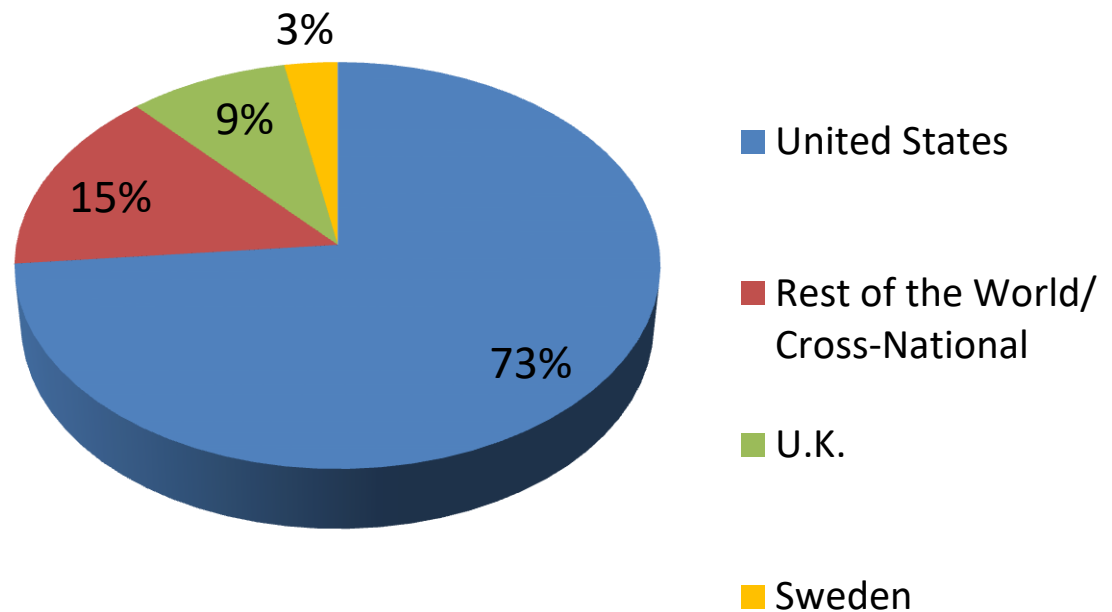
---

## 2:3:1 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

---

The literature to date is geographically limited with most of the studies based upon data collected in the U.S., with 25 out of 37 solely using U.S. data and a further five cross-national studies including it (Figure 2, p.15). After almost two decades of empirical work addressing the effects of religiosity on environmental concern it seems surprising that all the research was conducted in the U.S. using U.S. data. This could lead one to assume that what became known as the 'Lynn White debate', or at least the empirical part, was essentially a debate about Christianity and the environment in just one country. When analysing studies caution needs to be expressed about making larger generalisations, as some variables may be particular to the U.S., such as the influence of conservative politics and the more widespread conservative evangelical tradition. This geographical imbalance was addressed by Bernadette Hayes and Manussos Marangudakis (2000, 2001). Their first article used national survey data from the U.S., Canada, Britain and New Zealand. However, their second study concentrated solely upon Britain. Further studies with geographical variation include the following: Anders Biel and Andreas Nilsson's (2005) study of Sweden; Miriam Pepper, Tim Jackson and David Uzzell's (2010, 2011) studies using data from two English towns; the multi-national studies of Alicia Weaver (2002) including data for Japan, Russia and Germany in addition to the U.S. and U.K.; Wesley Schultz, Lynnette Zelezny and Nancy Dalrymple's work (2000) on data from 14 countries mainly in North, South and Central America; Paul Dekker, Peter Ester and Masja Nas' study (1997) including data for 20 countries, and Andrew Whitford and Karen Wong's (2009) multi-national study of 80 countries. A natural conclusion to reach from this overview is that the real need for future studies is to make adequate representation of countries other than the U.S. This could help offset the existing imbalance and add to our current understanding of the relationship between Christianity and the environment in a global context.

FIGURE 2: GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH BY COUNTRY



Source: Calculated from 37 quantitative empirical studies included as Appendix 1.

---

#### 2:3:2 TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION

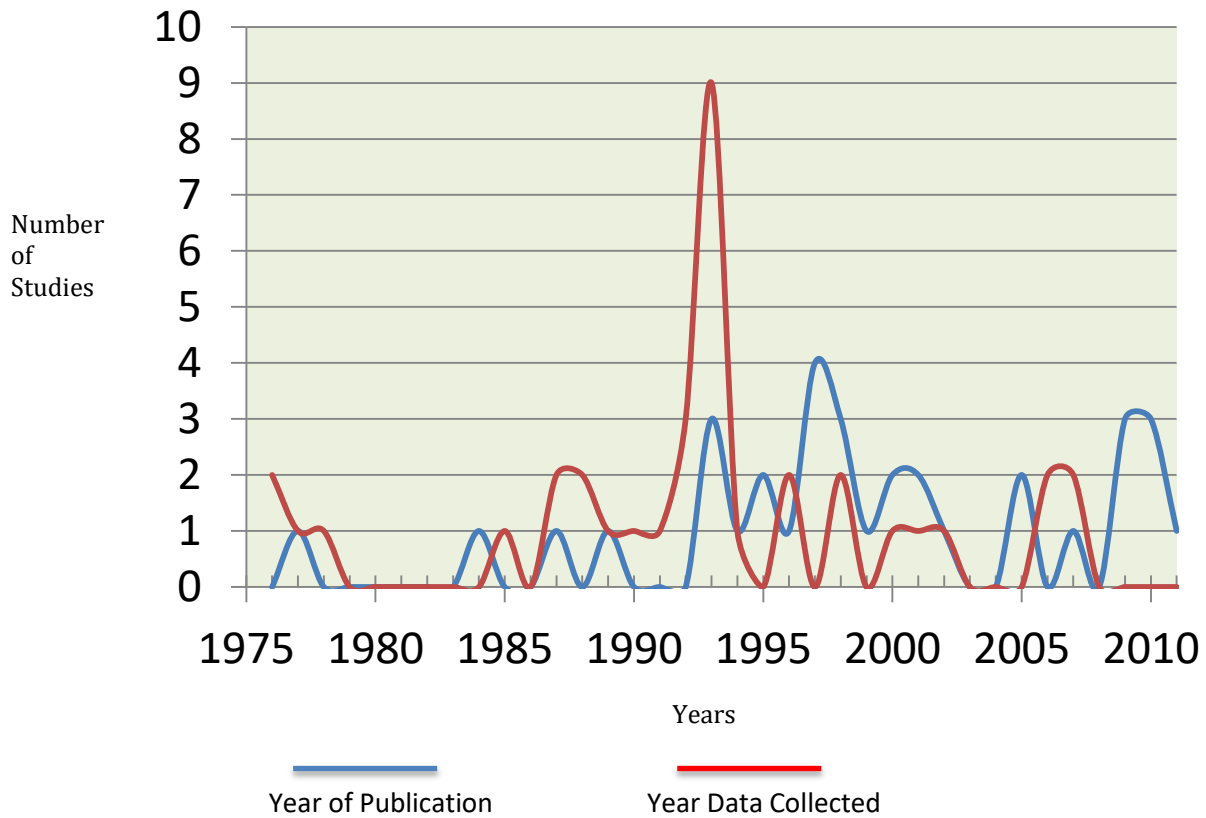
---

Years of publication indicate that empirical research has been relatively continuous since the mid-1980s. The first study including religious and environmental measures was undertaken in 1977, followed by three studies in the mid to late 1980s, 15 studies in the 1990s, and a further 15 from 2000-2011. The highest clustering of studies is from 1993-97, with 11 publications during these five years. However, results change when looking at the year data was collected for each study rather than the year of publication as can be seen in Figure 3. Results then show that three studies used data from the 1970s, six from the 1980s, 18 from the 1990s and just seven used data from 2000-2007. Data collected in the early 1990s (from 1990 to 1993) was used in 11 studies, including nine in just 1993 and all but one of these using the same data sets from the 1993 General Social Survey (GSS) in the U.S. or the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in other countries.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> The ISSP is an association of survey programs covering numerous countries focusing on topical social issues. It is a more widespread manifestation of the General Social Survey in the U.S. and the British Social Attitudes Survey in the U.K. See <http://www.issp.org> (Accessed: 2/2/2013).

FIGURE 3: TEMPORAL LOCATION OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES BY YEAR OF PUBLICATION AND YEAR OF DATA COLLECTION



Source: Calculated from the 37 quantitative empirical studies included in Appendix 1.

A number of themes emerge from this data. Firstly, most studies rely upon older data collected either generally during national social surveys or for other academic projects. Few studies actually administered their own data collection methods or designed their own questions for survey as did Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple (2000) and also Heather Truelove and Jeff Joireman (2009). One drawback is that often ‘best fit’ questions and answers are selected to use as variables, resulting in data that does not easily fit research questions. For instance some studies, such as that by Andrew Greeley (1993), only include one measure for environmental attitudes whilst others were unable to control important variables. A greater level of accuracy can be gained when academics design their own questions, and operationalise the measures they wish to investigate, as perfectly as they can, rather than finding data sets that may have some relevance.

Secondly, from 1996 onwards, the data used for eight studies was collected from either the 1993 GSS of the U.S. or its more widespread replication in the 1993 ISSP. On the positive side, the

GSS included a vast number of forty different measures for the environment, covering both attitudes and behaviours, far more than had been used in previous studies, as well as numerous religious indicators (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996, p.343). However the negative side seems to be the attractive lure of this data on future studies, even many years later, for example with Darren Sherkat and Christopher Ellison (2007). A substantial proportion of empirical work addressing the White thesis after 1993 would rely on interpreting and reinterpreting the data from these two surveys. In fact one quarter of all the empirical work used this data, and from 1996 until the present 38% of studies have relied upon it (Figure 3, p.16).

---

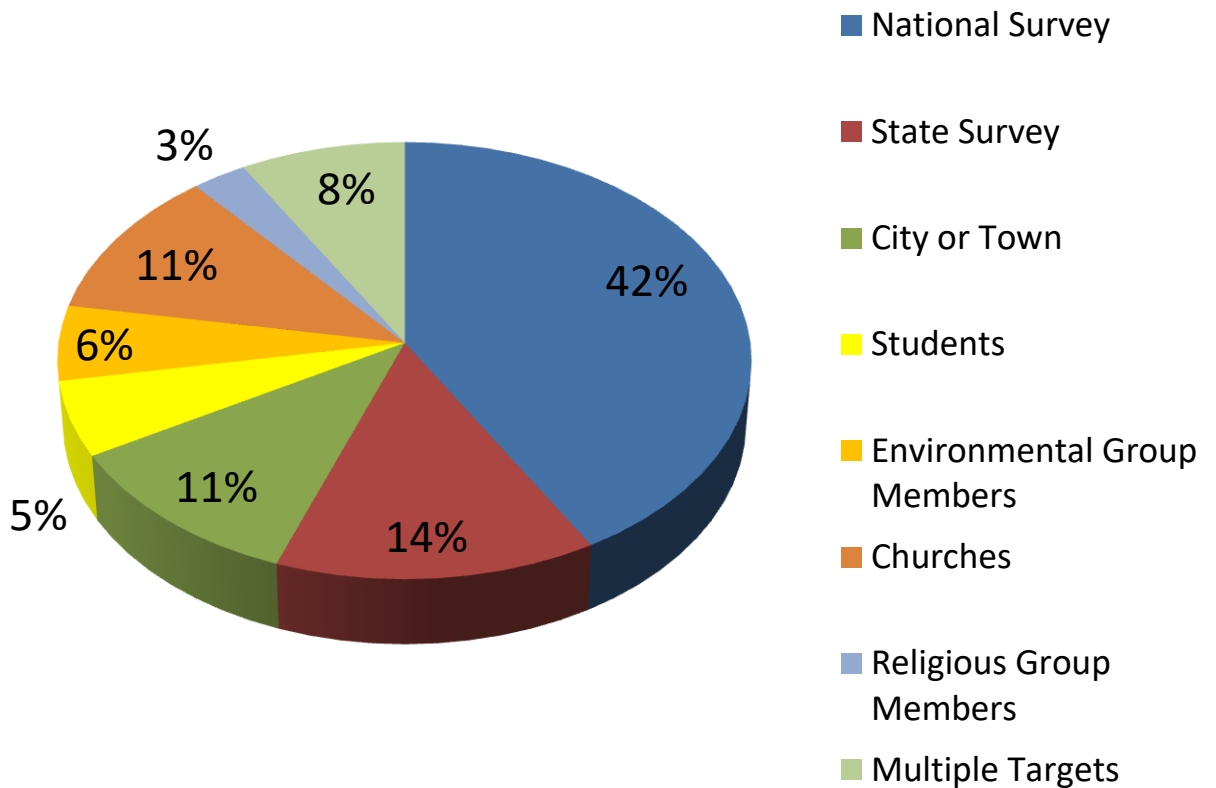
### 2:3:3 TARGET GROUPS

---

The data used in research has most frequently been from random samples of the national population, such as with the GSS in the U.S. (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996; Boyd, 1999; Sherkat and Ellison, 2007) or the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey in the U.K. (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2001), see Figure 4. Others have focused upon a particular U.S. state (Hand and Van Liere, 1984; Kanagy and Willits, 1993), city (Kanagy and Nelsen, 1995) or town (Eckberg and Blocker, 1989). However, some studies have been very specific in targeting certain groups. Ronald Shaiko (1987) and Robert Lowry (1998) surveyed members of environmental and conservation groups whilst James Guth *et al.* (1993) focused upon activists of several religious interest organisations. Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple (2000) and Truelove and Joireman (2009) are the only studies to concentrate upon samples of university students. Others have prioritised the pastors and members of a specific denomination such as the Presbyterian Church of the U.S. (PCUSA) as do Nalini Tarakeshwar *et al.* (2001) and also Laurel Holland and J. Scott Carter (2005). Each different target group focus gives different insights as do the types of measures that are used.



FIGURE 4: TARGET GROUPS OF DATA USED IN EMPIRICAL STUDIES



Source: Calculated from the 37 quantitative empirical studies included in Appendix 1. 'Religious Group Members' included organisations such as Focus on the Family, Prison Fellowship, Just Life and Bread for the World (Guth *et al.* 1993, p.374). Environmental Group Members included the Sierra Club, Environmental Defense Fund and the Wilderness Society (Shaiko, 1987, p.248; Lowry, 1998, p.226).

#### 2:4 MEASURES OF RELIGIOSITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

The complexity of the task for the social scientist has been in deciding which measures to use to assess aspects of religiosity in addition to environmental attitudes and behaviours and this has been a problematic issue in the empirical literature. However, studies seem to have gradually become more complex and focused; incorporating more comprehensive measures, yet still rarely through data designed specifically for this purpose. Disentangling Christian beliefs from the influence of a

wider cultural heritage is no easy task. How researchers have conceptualised the problem will no doubt have influenced results, being one of the reasons why some studies have resulted in different conclusions. For instance, two competing themes that emerge that have legitimate theological roots are mastery over nature and stewardship concepts. Both can have direct implications for environmental concern and whereas earlier studies test the former as espoused by White (Hand and Van Liere, 1984; Woodrum and Hoban, 1994), many later studies focus on the growing area of stewardship beliefs (Tarakeshwar *et al.* 2001; Holland and Carter, 2005).

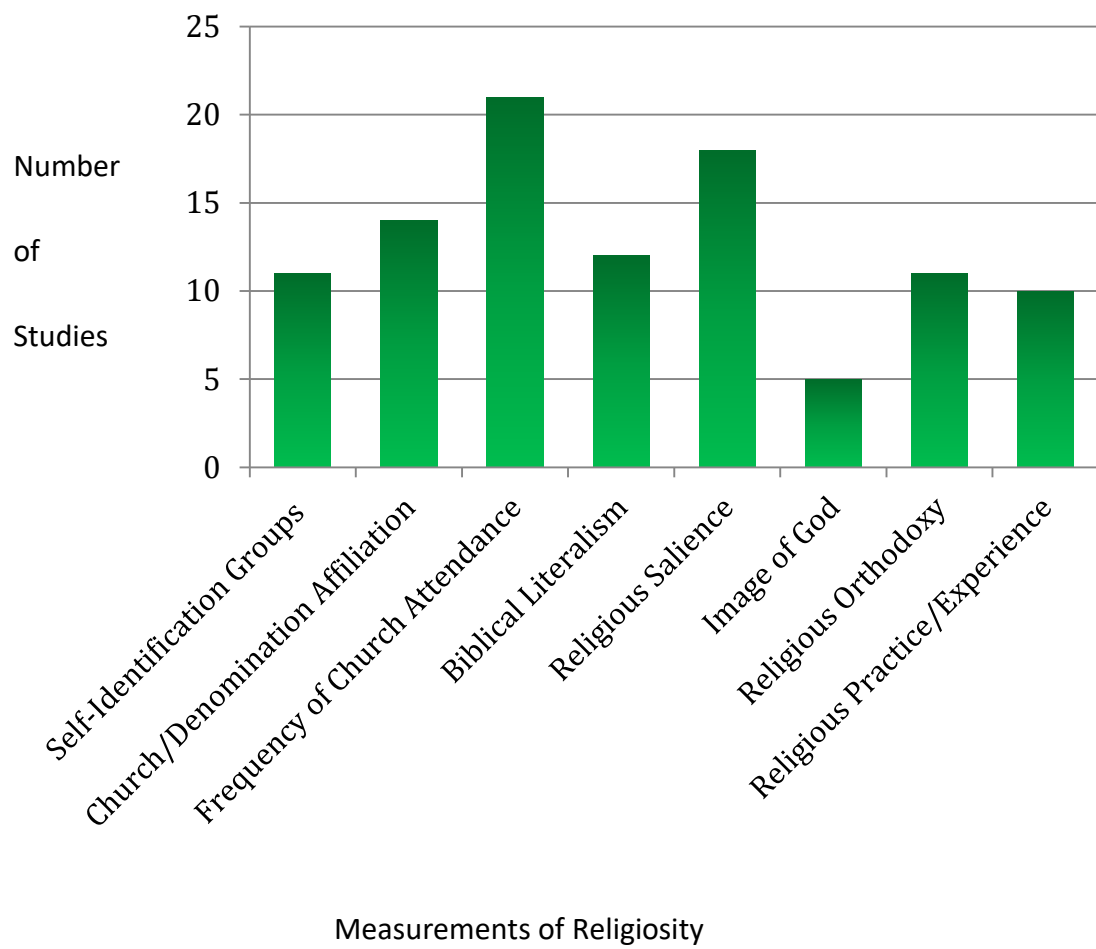
---

#### 2:4:1 HOW HAS RELIGIOSITY BEEN OPERATIONALISED?

---

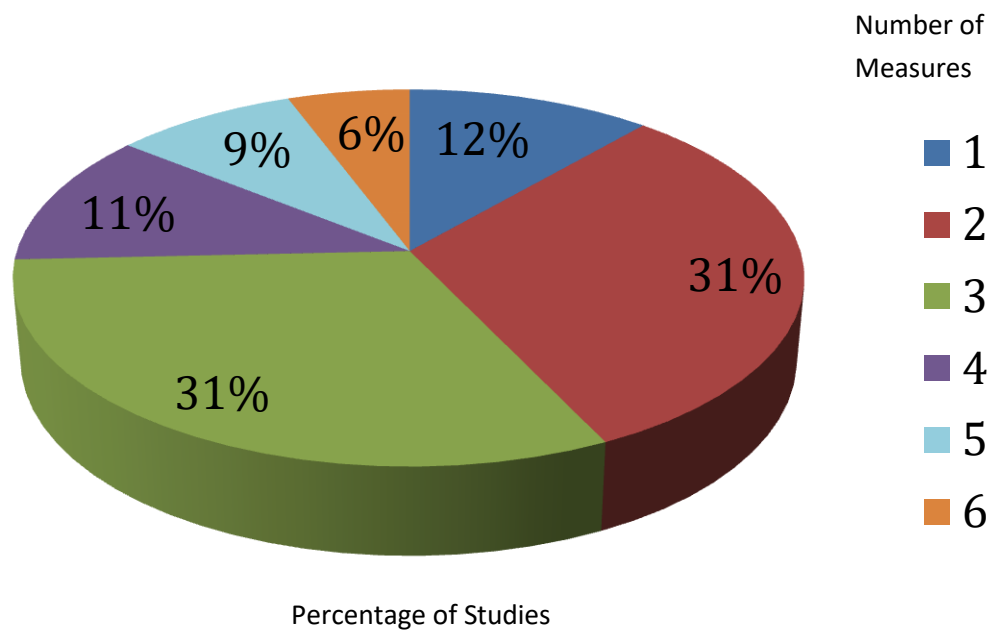
The 37 empirical studies have attempted to ‘operationalise religiosity’, or in other words to test how religious someone is and differentiate between various types and levels of religious beliefs, in a number of ways. However, there has been no accepted standardized format of how to exactly delineate different types of Christian expression. This is in part a result of the mixed ways in which measures have been either gleaned from various national surveys such as Greeley (1993), Michelle Wolkomir *et al.* (1997b) and Thomas Dietz, Paul Stern and Gregory Guagnano (1998); from more localised surveys conducted for other research projects such as Hand and Van Liere (1984), Douglas Eckberg and T. Jean Blocker (1989) and Wolkomir *et al.* (1997a); or some of the empirical studies designing their own questions for survey such as Truelove and Joireman (2009), Paul Djupe and Patrick Hunt (2009) and Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel (2011). A number of measures (most frequently two or three) are commonly used in combination with each other (Figure 6, p.21). An analysis of the 37 empirical studies has revealed that the following eight religious identification measures have most frequently been adopted: self-identification in broad groups, self-identification or affiliation with particular denominations or churches, biblical literalism, frequency of church attendance, religious salience, religious orthodoxy, religious practice or experience, and image of God (Figure 5, p.20).

FIGURE 5: HOW RELIGIOSITY IS OPERATIONALISED



Source: Calculated from the 37 quantitative empirical studies included in Appendix 1.

FIGURE 6: NUMBER OF RELIGIOSITY MEASURES USED FROM THE CATEGORIES IN FIGURE 5



Source: Calculated from the 37 quantitative empirical studies included in Appendix 1.

Self-identification in broad groupings is when respondents will simply identify themselves in one of a number of broad groups such as all or some of the following: Non-religious, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Liberal Protestant, Moderate Protestant or Conservative Protestant. This technique has been used by eleven of the studies, such as Shaiko (1987, p.248) and Dietz, Stern and Guagnano (1998, p.457). Self-identification or affiliation in denominations or churches is when respondents can identify themselves from a long list, often of around ten or more different denominations. These have included groups such as Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Southern Baptist, Church of the Nazarene, or Assemblies of God. The researchers will then group together churches into broader categories for the purpose of analysis, such as with the previous grouping in broad categories: Non-religious, Roman Catholic, Liberal Protestant, (sometimes Moderate Protestant) and at the farthest right end of the spectrum what has been identified as Conservative or Evangelical or Fundamentalist Protestants. This method has been utilized by fourteen of the studies, such as Wolkomir *et al.* (1997a, p.330) and Hayes and Marangudakis (2000, p.161). With this method great power is vested in the researcher who places everyone from a specific church or denomination into one group, and is therefore unable to account for variety

within a denomination. For instance, some studies will put the whole of the Southern Baptist movement into a 'Conservative or Fundamentalist' category, such as Guth *et al.* (1995, pp.369-70), even though it is improbable the whole movement would describe themselves in that way. In addition, not all studies group every denomination in the same way: Methodists have been placed in 'Liberal Protestant' by some (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, p.161) and 'Moderate Protestant' by others (Wolkomir *et al.* 1997a, p.343). The Church of the Nazarene, although being a Wesleyan Holiness church and therefore having its roots in the Methodist tradition and early U.S. Pentecostalism, has been placed in a 'Conservative Protestant' group by Wolkomir *et al.* (1997a, p.343) or 'Protestant Sects' by Hand and Van Liere (1984, p.569); the latter is especially misleading as it groups them with Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists and Christian Scientists. It is clear that a discrepancy exists between studies when denominations are categorised by researchers, in addition to some categorisations being misleading, and further examples include categorisation of both Lutherans and the Assemblies of God.

Such differences may be in part due to the fact that many empirical studies are undertaken by academics who may not be practising Christians, evangelical or otherwise, as none of the authors identify themselves in this way, and this further complicates the reliability of practices used as they do not benefit from having 'insider knowledge' of specific Protestant churches and doctrines. Other studies focusing more upon evangelical Protestants have further broken this group down into 'fundamentalist, charismatic, Pentecostal, conservative or evangelical' (Guth *et al.* 1993, p.376) or 'fundamentalist, charismatic or evangelical Protestant' (Eckberg and Blocker, 1989, p.511), though it is not clear what the differences may be.

Biblical literalism is a common technique to differentiate between what the literature terms fundamentalist, liberal Protestant and atheist, and has been used in twelve of the studies (Figure 5, p.20): such as those by Eckberg and Blocker (1989); Greeley (1993); and Stephen Klineberg, Matthew McKeever and Bert Rosenbach (1998). Here respondents are given three possible alternative ways to view the Bible and they rate them on a 'Likert-type' point scale.<sup>15</sup> For instance, options of how to view the Bible could be, first, that it is the inspired word of God and should be taken literally word for word, second, that the Bible is inspired by God but contains human errors, or third, that the Bible is a book of fables and history that God had nothing to do with (Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.743).

---

<sup>15</sup> The 'Likert-type Scale', named after its inventor Rensis Likert, is a technique commonly used in survey research that uses questionnaires. It is whereby respondents, when answering a specific question, are given a scale of points, normally five, to choose from. For instance, 1) Strongly agree, 2) Agree, 3) Neither agree nor disagree, 4) Disagree, 5) Strongly disagree.

Frequency of church attendance has been the most common technique to use in operationalising religiosity, featuring in twenty-one of the studies. This technique is able to separate active Christians from more dormant or cultural Christians by separating those that attend church regularly. Scales used often measure attendance from several times per week, weekly, monthly, several times per year, or barely ever (Sherkat and Ellison, 2007, p.76). This appears to be one of the best measures available, though of course it is still open to error, as for instance many elderly people cut down or stop their church attendance due to old age or ill health, which would lead them to be factored out. Other studies using this measure include Hand and Van Liere (1984), Greeley (1993) and Eric Woodrum and Thomas Hoban (1994).

Religious salience is a measure of how important respondents see religion in their lives and has been used in eighteen of the studies (Figure 5, p.20). Again the Likert-type scale is often used with five or seven points to answer specific questions. Questions for religious salience have included 'How important would you say religion is in your life?' (Eckberg and Blocker, 1989, p.511; Woodrum and Hoban, 1994, p.196) and 'Would you consider yourself as having strong religious affiliation?' (Woodrum and Wolkomir, 1997, p.227). Level of belief in God has also been measured by choosing one from a range of possible answers such as 'I know God exists and I have no doubt about it' at one end of the spectrum to 'I don't believe in God' at the other (Boyd, 1999, p.38).

Religious orthodoxy is that measure by which respondents answer questions in relation to specific Christian doctrines and beliefs. Examples include adherence to the six-day biblical creation account (Woodrum and Hoban, 1994, p.196), a belief in the final judgement (Kanagy and Nelsen, 1995), in heaven and hell (Ester and Seuren, 1992), in prophecy, in being 'born again', and in dispensational eschatology (Guth *et al.* 1995, p.371). Measures of religious orthodoxy have been used in eleven of the studies (Figure 5). Religious practice or experience has included the measure of frequency of prayer (Djupe and Hunt, 2009, p.686) and frequency of Bible reading (Guth *et al.* 1995, p.371). Religious experience has also involved the belief that the power of God can be seen in everyday activities and lives of Christians (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996, p.348) and that miracles still happen today by the power of God (Kanagy and Nelsen, 1995, p.37). Measures of religious practice or experience have been used in 10 of the studies.

The measure of 'Image of God' was an idea first used by Greeley (1993). Here labels or terms are given to respondents to choose how 'graceful' is their view of God. Examples include mother, friend, spouse, master, king, judge, father (Greeley, 1993, p.22). In addition, terms have also been used for a 'benevolent God' such as forgiving, guiding, helpful, merciful and loving, or a 'strict God'

such as punishing, rigid, strict, or wrathful (Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel, 2011, p.280). In total five studies use this technique (Figure 5) including Heather Boyd (1999) and Eckberg and Blocker (1996).

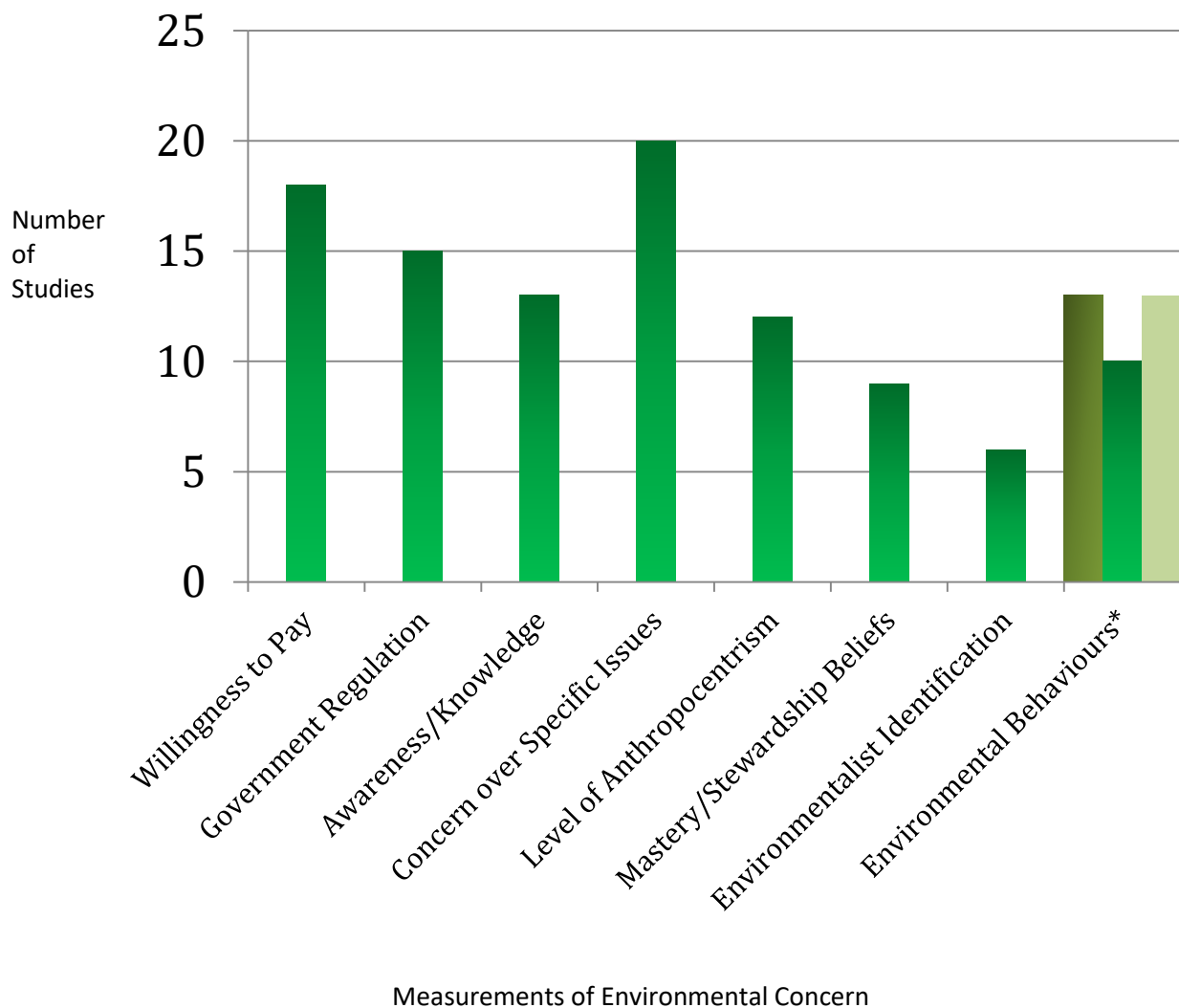
---

#### 2:4:2 HOW ARE ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR OPERATIONALISED?

---

Just as with religiosity, environmental concern has also been measured in various ways. An analysis of the empirical literature has shown that the majority of these measures can be placed into eight different categories (Figure 7, p.25). As with religiosity, there is no set standardised mode of measurement across the literature yet eight common themes emerge. It should be noted that of the eight thematic clusters presented in Figure 7, multiple questions are commonly used for each category and most studies adopt three or four of the eight measures. Likert-type point scales are again a common format for assessing responses to environmental sections of questionnaires.

FIGURE 7: HOW ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN IS OPERATIONALISED



Source: Number of studies using particular measures calculated from the 37 empirical studies included in Appendix 1.\*Environmental Behaviours placed into 3 categories (Activism, Consumption and Lifestyle).

The most frequent measure of attitudes has been ‘concern over specific environmental issues’ which has been used in twenty of the studies (Figure 7). Environmental concern or perception of dangers has been measured in relation to any of the following issues: air and water pollution, industrial pollution, population levels, resource conservation, runaway technologies, nuclear power, pesticide use, and climate change (Shaiko, 1987, p.248; Weaver, 2002, p.90; Biel and Nilsson, 2005, p.184). These are most commonly presented as general issues yet occasionally there is a focus upon local issues such as air and water quality in a respondent’s specific locality (local streams/rivers and lakes), and the availability and effectiveness of local waste disposal facilities (Eckberg and Blocker,



1989, p.511). The second most commonly used measure is 'willingness to pay', adopted in half the studies. Questions operationalising this measure assess an individual's willingness to personally pay for a higher level of environmental quality. This could include paying higher tax rates, extra taxes, increased prices for goods, or just general cuts in family income and standard of living, such as in Guth *et al.* (1993, p.375) and Tarakeshwar *et al.* (2001, p.393). These measures assess an economic/environment trade-off in personal willingness to pay for such things as a reduction in pollution and a stricter protection of nature.

Related to this measure, though separate, is 'government regulation'. This again measures the economy versus environment prioritization, but this time via government legislation rather than a willingness to financially pay. These include levels of support for increased government regulation generally (Hand and Van Liere, 1984, p.559; Stanford and Brewer, 2011, p.11), more environmental controls at the expense of growth and development (Woodrum and Hoban, 1994, p.198; Kanagy and Nelsen, 1995, p.37), the regulation of businesses and personal behaviour via legislation to protect the environment (Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.740), whether government focus should be upon environmental protection at the expense of jobs (Guth *et al.* 1993, p.376), and attitudes toward the use of nature for economic advancement (Wolkomir *et al.* 1997a, p.329). In total, fifteen studies have measured government regulation (Figure 7).

A further measure could be termed 'environmental awareness or knowledge' and this measure has been operationalised by thirteen of the studies. This is whereby a study attempts to gauge the level of awareness and/or knowledge of a specific environmental issue: this could be the perceived seriousness of the threat in relation to public health (Truelove and Joireman, 2009, p.811), knowledge and level of understanding of the scientific arguments involved (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996, p.347; Weaver, 2002, p.91), and the way respondents may have been exposed to different media sources discussing an issue (Woodrum and Hoban, 1994, p.198). An example of one specific environmental issue used is that of climate change (Michaud, 2009, pp.8-11; Djupe and Gwiasda, 2010, pp.78-82). Also included is the extent to which people see environmental concerns as either one of the most important issues facing society (Guth *et al.* 1993, p.376), or rather something that is exaggerated (Biel and Nilsson, 2005, p.183-184). A less common measure has been a respondent's willingness to be identified as an environmentalist (Kanagy and Nelsen, 1995, p.37), and association with and attitudes towards environmental advocacy groups (Guth *et al.* 1995, p.380). A total of six studies include this environmentalist identification (Figure 7).

A more complex measure, yet of crucial importance in relation to the White thesis, is what I have termed 'level of anthropocentrism'. Studies adopting this technique attempt to gauge a

person's willingness to move from the societal norm of prevailing anthropocentric values to ecologically integrated positions (Kanagy and Willits, 1993). For this purpose the New Environmental Paradigm<sup>16</sup> (NEP) has been used by studies such as Hand and Van Liere, 1984, p.558; Kanagy and Willits, 1993, p.676; Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple, 2000, p.581. The movement that the NEP has attempted to gauge has been described as 'from human dominance over nature to that of human interdependence with the natural world' (Weaver, 2002, p.79). Specific questions address the need to preserve the balance of nature, to limit growth to protect the environment and that humans are a part of nature rather than above it (Kanagy and Willits, 1993, p.676). In addition to the use of the NEP, Thompson and Barton's<sup>17</sup> (1994) scale of eco-centric versus anthropocentric environmental values has been incorporated (Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple, 2000, p.581). An 'ecological world-view' assessing such things as nature's purpose not being primarily for human use and that humans need to be integrated as part of their environment has also been used (Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.740). 'Level of anthropocentrism' has been measured by 12 studies.

Attempts to measure the extent to which the Genesis creation account is either interpreted as a dominion/mastery over nature orientation or alternatively more in line with stewardship, feature in nine studies, such as those by Eckberg and Blocker (1996), Hayes and Marangudakis (2000, 2001), Tarakeshwar *et al.* (2001) and Holland and Carter (2005). Here both interpretations represent anthropocentric positions yet mastery over nature has negative effects upon the environment whilst stewardship represents a more caring attitude. This is why these measures have been organised as a different theme to 'level of anthropocentrism' though they obviously are closely related. Whereas 'dominion/stewardship' measures interpret biblical anthropocentrism, 'level of anthropocentrism' measures the ability to move beyond an anthropocentric paradigm. Questions used to assess mastery over nature versus stewardship assess the level of agreement with such assertions as the following: humans were created to rule over the rest of nature and plants and animals exist primarily

---

<sup>16</sup> The NEP was a concept first put forward by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) in response to the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) which endorses the societal world-view that approves of economic growth, progress and individuality (Weaver, 2002, p.79). The NEP attempted to assess the extent to which a target group were open to a shift in values from purely anthropocentric to being more ecologically minded and specifically that individual behaviour should incorporate responsibility in relation to effects upon the environment. Within broader environmental attitudes research it has been described as the most widely used measure (Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple, 2000, p.579).

<sup>17</sup> Suzanne Thompson and Michelle Barton (1994) developed a battery of questions to measure eco-centric and anthropocentric valuations of the environment. With regards to environmental degradation eco-centric refers to the intrinsic worth of plants and animals whereas anthropocentric refers to how environmental problems affect humans.

to be used by humans (Hand and Van Liere, 1984, p.558; Wolkomir *et al.* 1997a, p.329); nature would be harmonious if only humans left it alone (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, p.163); and almost everything we do in modern life harms the environment (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2001, p.145). Attitudes toward animal rights have been assessed (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996, p.347), with a specific example via the question 'should animals have the same moral rights as humans' (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2001, p.145). Some of these studies, such as Hayes and Marangudakis (2000 and 2001), used measures that are more in line with the NEP, and it is possible that although their stated aim was to measure stewardship or mastery over nature, they were in fact measuring willingness to move beyond anthropocentrism rather than either of its two forms. Indeed, Eckberg and Blocker (1996, p.347) express doubt over whether the questions they themselves gleaned from the 1993 GSS to measure mastery over nature or stewardship actually adequately do this, as they point in the direction of animal rights on an equality basis rather than a biblical stewardship basis. The fact that nine of the 37 empirical studies use the results of the 1993 GSS therefore further complicates the reliability of results specifically measuring biblical stewardship as the tendency is to drift to an NEP model, certain elements of which have been linked with the New Age movement and eastern religions (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996, p.347). This would be a further reason why conservative Christians score lower with this measure. A further and possibly more reliable way a stewardship orientation has been measured is by what has been termed 'sacredness of nature'. Here, level of agreement is assessed with such positions as 'nature is sacred because it was created by God' and that 'humans should respect nature more because it was created by God' (Tarakeshwar *et al.* 2001, p.392).

Environmental behaviours have also been assessed as well as environmental attitudes. Together they represent a green lifestyle index. They represent past, present, and intentional actions. These can be broken down into three different categories: environmental activism as measured in thirteen studies; consumption patterns as measured in ten studies; and other lifestyle choices affecting the environment as measured in thirteen studies (Figure 7).

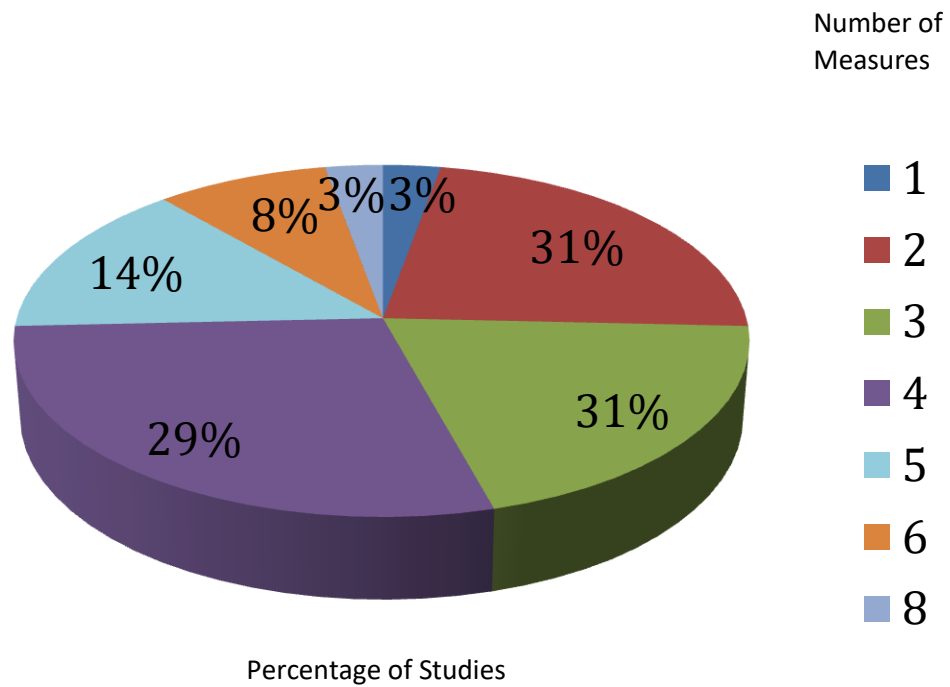
Activism, environmental or political, includes those measures of involvement with such things as: the signing of environmental petitions for issues such as opposition to nuclear power, new oil drilling, or other pollution (Weigel, 1977, p.42); social and political activism such as taking part in an environmental demonstration (Woodrum and Wolkomir, 1997, p.228); and active support of an environmental group or cause through financial support, being a member or giving of one's time (Wolkomir *et al.* 1997a, p.329; Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.740). Also taking part in other environmentally important activities such as boycotting certain products for environmental

reasons (Wolkomir *et al.* 1997a, p.329); voting for a certain political candidate or party for environmental reasons (Truelove and Joireman, 2009, pp.811-2); or writing letters campaigning for environmental causes (Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple, 2000, p.581). These are often assessed by the identification of the number of times these things have been done in the previous year. Activism has figured in 13 of the studies.

Behaviours assessed by consumption include eating organic produce for environmental reasons or stopping eating certain foods because of safety concerns (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996, p.347), eating vegetarian food for environmental reasons (Woodrum and Wolkomir, 1997, p.228), and restricting automobile use to reduce emissions (Dietz, Stern and Guagnano, 1998, p.466). These have figured in ten of the studies, such as Kanagy and Willits (1993), Eckberg and Blocker (1996), Woodrum and Wolkomir (1997) and Boyd (1999).

The group of other lifestyle practices include the following: purchasing second hand products instead of new ones (Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple, 2000, p.580); purchasing ethically or frugally (Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel, 2011, pp.279-80); involvement with kerbside recycling (Dietz, Stern and Guagnano, 1998, p.466); picking up other people's litter (Weigel, 1977, pp.41-42; Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple, 2000, p.580); and travelling to observe, feed or photograph wildlife (Lowry, 1998, pp.228-9). These measures feature in 13 of the studies (Figure 7).

FIGURE 8: NUMBER OF ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES USED FROM THE CATEGORIES IN FIGURE 7



Source: Calculated from the 37 quantitative empirical studies included in Appendix 1.

This detailed overview of the ways environmental concern has been operationalised is of great importance in relation to the conclusions the studies report as the techniques used can influence results. The number and variety of methods may be one reason why there is so much variety across the 37 empirical studies with both negative and positive relationships identified.

## 2:5 RESULTS OF STUDIES IN RELATION TO THE WHITE THESIS AND DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES

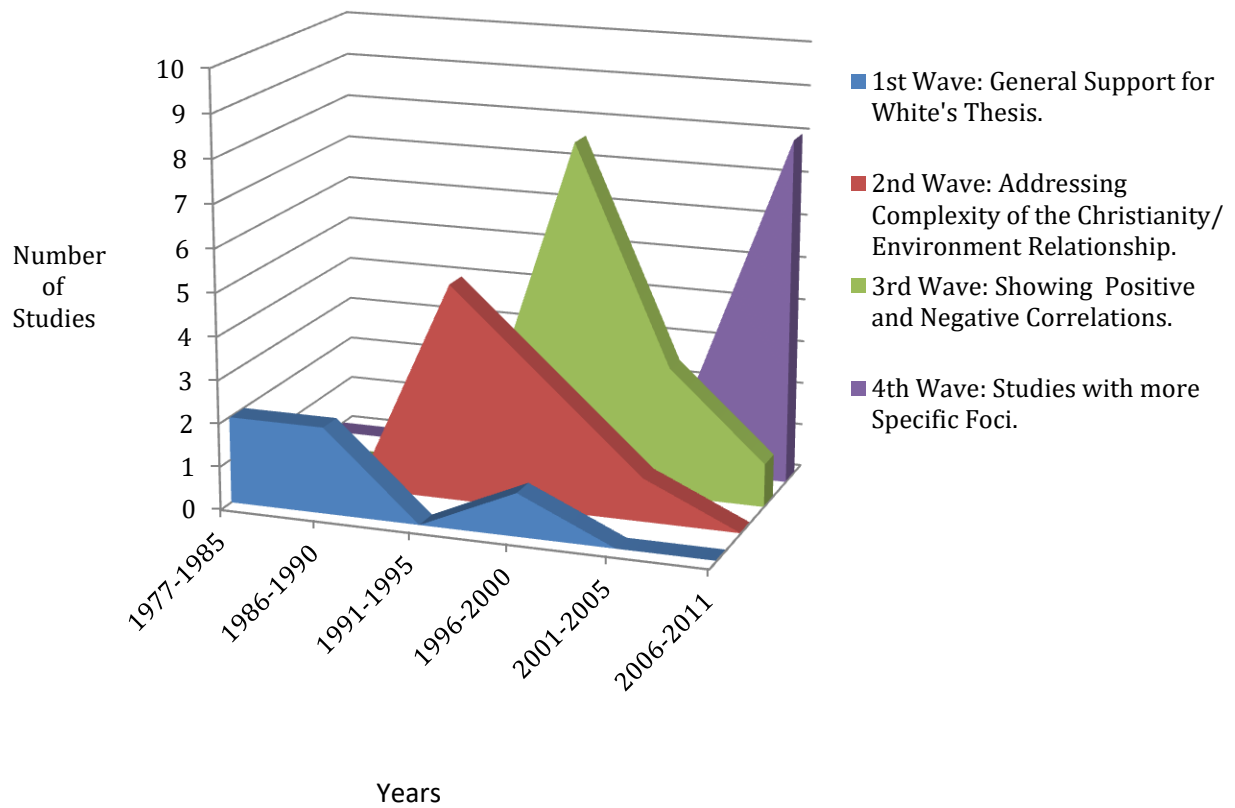
### 2:5:1 THE FOUR WAVES OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The empirical literature surrounding the Lynn White debate has been said to represent ‘three waves’ (Woodrum and Wolkomir, 1997, pp.223-4). The first wave generally supported White in that Christian people were generally less concerned about the environment than non-Christians, measuring level of adherence to mastery over nature orientations. However, some acknowledged

differences between denominations. The second wave questioned initial findings, analysed in greater detail several issues, and offered reasons why certain patterns had been found, rather than just presenting the results. Greeley (1993) was the first in this respect to offer an engaged look at causes, in particular, reasons for the negative links between conservative evangelicals and the environment. The third wave then represented those studies finding positive as well as negative results of religiosity and environmental concern. The third wave may represent evidence that the stewardship ethic has begun to replace mastery over nature as the more common interpretation of Christian roles with regards to the environment.

In addition, the synthesis provided in this chapter notes that more recent studies may be said to represent what could be termed a 'fourth wave' of literature. These have focused in far greater detail on individual issues such as the effect of pastors on congregants, especially in relation to the absorption of denominational environmental declarations amongst laypersons (Djupe and Gwiasda, 2010), effects of congregational setting on value formation and decision making in relation to environmental attitudes and behaviours (Djupe and Hunt, 2009), and the relationship between Christianity and sustainable consumption patterns (Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel, 2011). Other research from the fourth wave has drawn upon social science theory to explain results, such as Sherkat and Ellison's (2007) use of structuration theory, or focusing upon underlying mechanisms at work, such as in Truelove and Joireman (2009). Recent research by DeLashmutt (2011), recognising the need to move beyond the three decades of strictly quantitative empirical analysis, has even adopted new research methods in assessing levels of environmental awareness amongst specific congregations of Cornish Anglicans in respect to the position taken by their denomination on environmental issues, in particular climate change, and how this has filtered down to church members. This, in addition to a small number of other studies, marks a 'fifth wave' of research using qualitative techniques that I have noted and which my own project forms a part. A graphical representation of the 'four waves' is presented in Figure 9 below.

FIGURE 9: THE 'FOUR WAVES' OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES ADDRESSING THE CHRISTIANITY AND ENVIRONMENT RELATIONSHIP



Source: Calculated from the 37 quantitative empirical studies in Appendix 1.

---

2:5:2 THE SECULAR NATURE OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

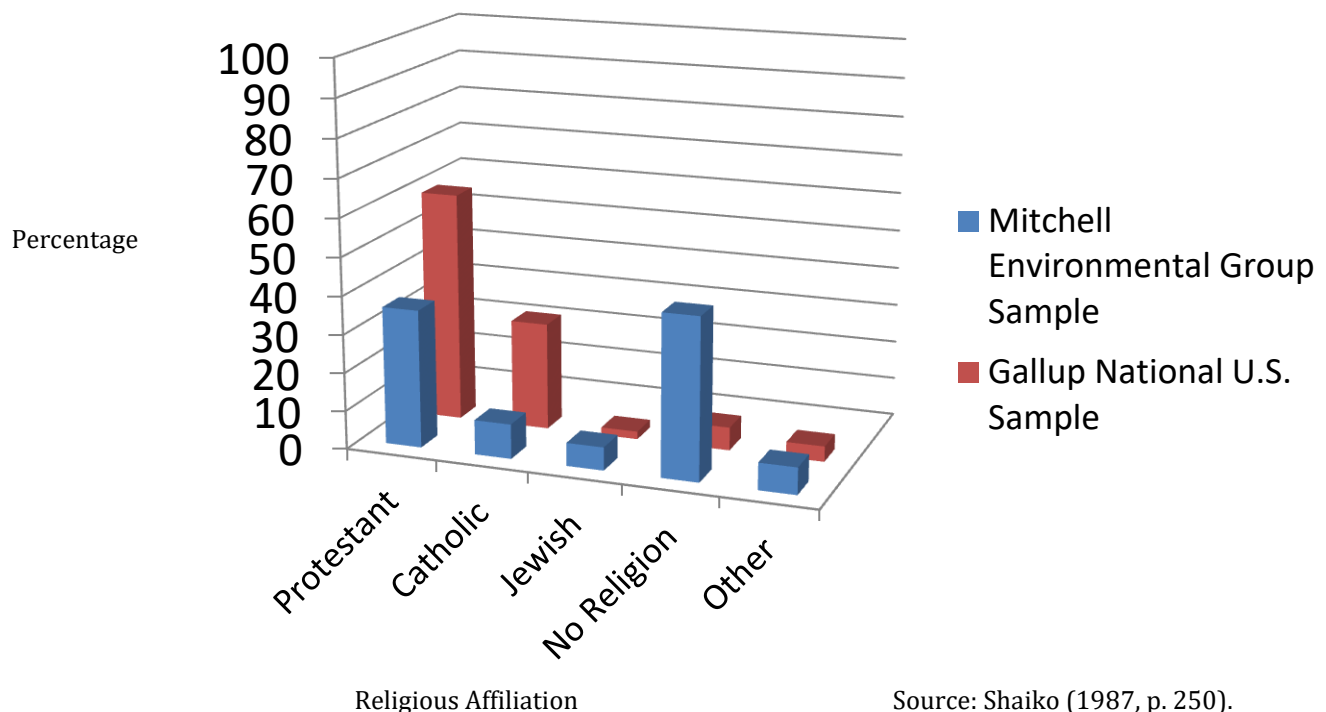
---

The two most striking and repeated results from the empirical literature are that non-Christians appear more pro-environmental than Christians do and that across the Christian spectrum fundamentalist or conservative evangelical denominations score lower than liberal Protestants or Roman Catholics in relation to environmental sensitivities (Figures 11 and 12, pp.34, 36). Shaiko (1987) compared data from the Mitchell environmental group sample with national data from the U.S. general population Gallup Survey (Figure 10, p.33). The results are striking and clearly highlight the more secular nature of environmental groups that advocate environmental protection as a central principle. A far lower percentage of Protestants and Catholics were members of environmental groups, findings also supported by the later study of Lowry (1998), in comparison to

the percentages they made up in the population at large. In addition, only 6% of the population identified themselves as non-religious whereas 42% of environmental group members did (Shaiko, 1987, p.250). It appears that Christian denominations have greater priorities than the environment and the environmental movement's largest member group is non-Christian, being more secular in nature.

Lowry set out to test the hypothesis that 'religious affiliation is an empirical measure of tastes and beliefs that affect demand for membership in environmental citizen groups' (Lowry, 1998, p.223). Results proved his hypothesis correct in that the number of adherents of Judeo-Christian denominations per household correlated negatively with state membership rates of nine environmental preservation groups, especially amongst Baptists, Mormons and Catholics, with the strongest correlation for conservative Protestants (Lowry, 1998, p.233). These results show the value conflict between Christian theology and environmental group goals, yet this requires further research to be unpacked in more detail.

FIGURE 10: RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION OF GENERAL PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP MEMBERS





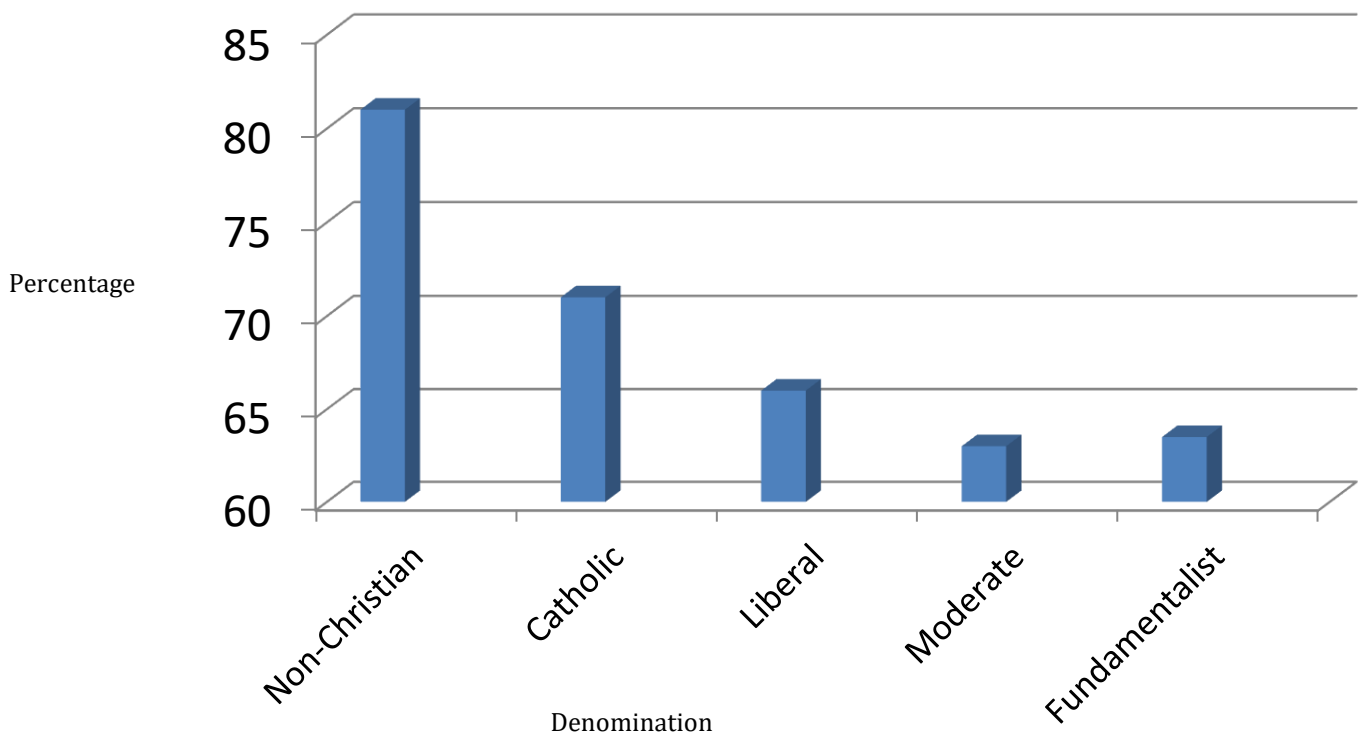
---

## 2:5:3 DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

---

Figure 11 shows a somewhat typical result from the earlier empirical research, in that non-Christians score higher with environmental attitudes than do Christians, yet there are substantial denominational differences. There is a sliding scale from non-Christians, with Catholics scoring the highest amongst Christian groups followed by liberal Protestant then moderate and fundamentalist Protestants scoring lowest (Greeley, 1993, p.23). This chart has been reproduced as it does represent a frequent pattern found also by Eckberg and Blocker (1989) and Guth *et al.* (1995). Other studies find the differences even more striking, however it should be noted that some studies have reported different findings. In particular not all have found Catholicism to be more environmentally sensitive than liberal Protestantism, for instance Hayes and Marangudakis (2000) found liberal Protestants more pro-environmental than Catholics.

FIGURE 11: SUPPORT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT BY DENOMINATION



Source: Greeley (1993, p.23).

Others have failed to find marked denominational differences in their data (Wolkomir *et al.* 1997a). Boyd found negative correlations for conservative evangelicalism and positive correlations for

frequency of prayer, but apart from this the Christian tradition could not be identified either negatively or positively with the environment (Boyd, 1999, p.42-43).

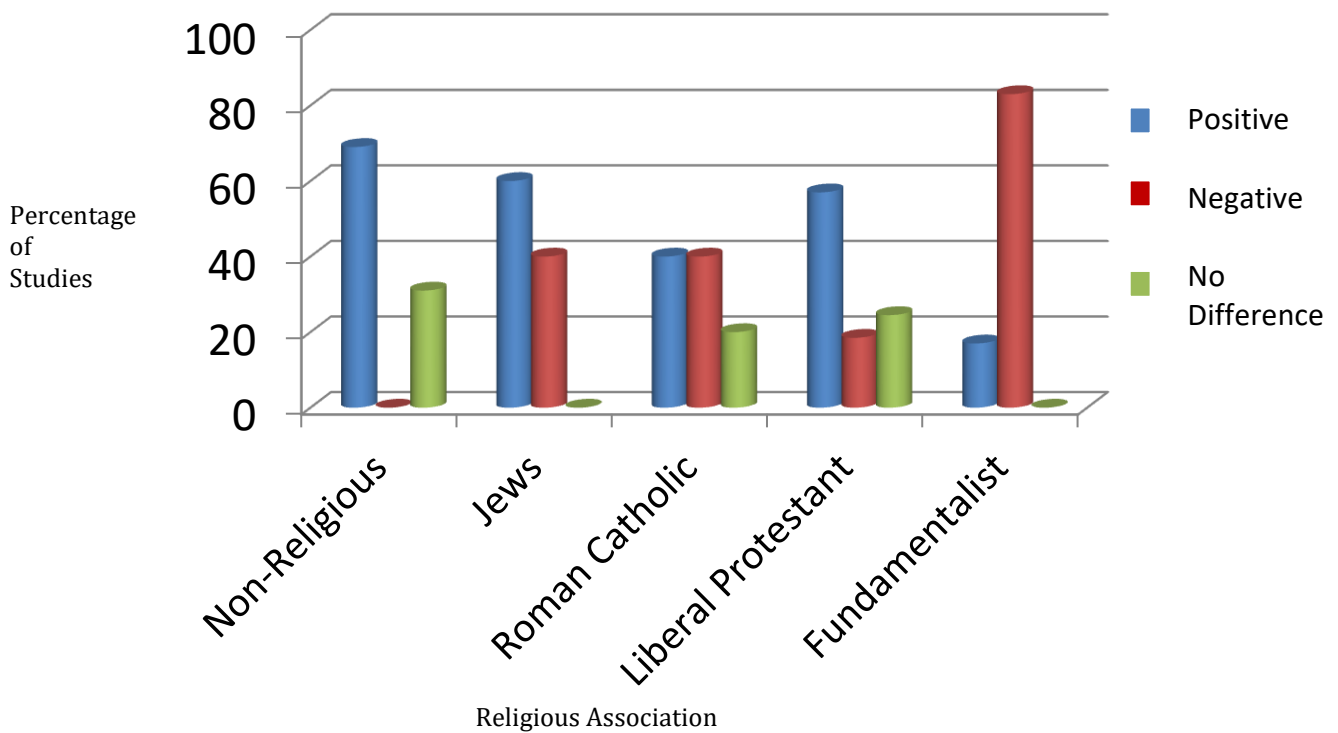
By compiling results from the 37 empirical studies into a graph (Figure 12), a consolidation of findings has been created, representing an important addition to current knowledge. This shows denominational correlations with environmental concern and behaviour, represented by the percentage of studies showing negative, positive or no difference in their results, for each denominational group. Percentages have been calculated from the number of studies that specifically address one or more of the specific denominational groups rather than the total number of empirical studies.

A main theme to emerge is the overwhelming consistency that evangelical conservative Protestant denominations score most negatively with environmental concern at a rate of 83%. A second theme is that non-religious people score far higher than any other group with levels of environmental concern, with 69% of studies scoring non-Christians higher than Christians, the remaining 31% finding no difference. Results for Roman Catholics are mixed, and Liberal Protestants have gained higher positive scores than Catholics.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>However, at this point I would add a note of caution in how these results (Figure 12) are interpreted. For instance, data presented in Chapters 5-7 and concluding Chapter 9 of this thesis, present a more detailed understanding of why previous empirical studies result in a negative correlation between conservative Christians and environmental concern. Furthermore, in some ways the results of my own research will challenge this perceived negative relationship.

FIGURE 12: NEGATIVE/POSITIVE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN BY DENOMINATION GROUP



Source: Calculated from the 37 quantitative empirical studies included in Appendix 1.

---

2:5:4 CAUSES OF DENOMINATIONAL AND CHRISTIAN/NON-CHRISTIAN DIFFERENCES

---

The empirical studies offer only brief and underdeveloped reasons as to why Christians generally score lower in relation to environmental concern. A common theme is that when environmental sensitivity is framed as a choice between personal economic or a general ecological wellbeing, Christians and more so those adhering to a stronger biblical literalism, show less support for the environment and more concern with the economy and employment (Truelove and Joireman, 2009, p.807). Such people also believe plants and animals are there for humans, rather than having inherent value, that the environment is doing fine and people worry too much about it, with the environmental movement ‘crying wolf’ too many times in the past.

With measures that question the extent to which people are open to adopting a new ecological consciousness, biblical fundamentalists and political conservatives have been found the most resistant (Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.749). They are the most likely to accept the view that plants and animals exist primarily to be used by humans, that daily activities like

driving automobiles and operating air conditioners do not harm the environment and that generally people worry too much about the global environment, with issues such as global warming not being a serious problem.

The charge of White that Christianity is an inherently anthropocentric religion was tested in detail by Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple (2000). This study utilised a complete anthropocentric/ecocentric scale devised by Thompson and Barton (1994). Results showed a consistent pattern across countries in that respondents who expressed more literal beliefs in the Bible scored lower in ecocentric values and higher in anthropocentric values. However, Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple also broaden our thinking around the term 'anthropocentrism'. They believe anthropocentrism still has the potential to be pro-environmental in as much as concerns for environmental damage are related to how this will affect the quality of life for humans. This is in sharp contrast to ecocentrism where nature is valued for its own sake. Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple (2000, p.588) therefore conclude that this does not mean Judeo-Christian beliefs are anti-environmental *per se*, as anthropocentrism does not result in zero concern, but that concern is rooted in possible effects degradation will have for humans.

Greeley (1993, p.22) points to a strong confidence in God's existence and a belief in biblical literalism as negative indicators of environmental concern. He also postulates that Catholics may have more environmental sensitivities than Protestants because Catholics have a more gracious image of God, such as mother, spouse or friend, whilst Protestants have a sterner image of God as master, father, judge or king (Greeley, 1993, p.23, 25). Boyd (1999, p.40), while explaining the link between fundamentalist tradition and weak environmental concern, noted how this group was less concerned about pollution and were more sceptical about participating in environmentally friendly behaviours.

---

## 2:6 CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY OR FUNDAMENTALISM

---

---

### 2:6:1 THE CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL TRADITION

---

The extent of the conservative evangelical (or what the empirical studies forming this chapter often refer to as 'fundamentalist' tradition) varies greatly amongst different countries.<sup>19</sup> For instance, the more conservative evangelical protestant churches in the U.S. such as Baptist, Brethren and

---

<sup>19</sup> I have previously pointed out in Chapter 1 my reasons for using the label conservative evangelical.

Lutheran make up 44% of the population whilst the figure is only 3% for the U.K. (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, p.162). However, it is possible other denominations in the U.K. could also be included in the conservative evangelical tradition. It can clearly be seen that previous U.S. based studies with repeated results confirming the strong links between conservative denominations and negative environmental concern, is a far greater issue in the U.S. than the U.K. in terms of numbers of people and therefore possible repercussions. In addition, evangelical Christians in the U.S. have often reached the highest echelons of political power unlike in the U.K. However, in relation to environmental concern, research into conservative evangelical Christians outside the U.S. has barely started and this represents an area of previous academic neglect.

Although there are a myriad of causes, many of which are still little understood, results of empirical studies show that different denominations can act in different ways when it comes to the environment. The first in depth multi-denominational study by Hand and Van Liere (1984) created a 'denominational diversity model' after finding that certain denominations in their study such as Episcopalians, Methodists and Presbyterians correlated more positively with environmental concern whilst Lutherans, Baptists and Protestant sects<sup>20</sup> correlated negatively (Hand and Van Liere, 1984, p.561). Indeed, the strongest and most frequent theme to emerge from the literature is that more conservative evangelical denominations score lower on measures of environmental concern and/or behaviour (Guth *et al.* 1993, p.379; 1995, pp.371, 373; Eckberg and Blocker, 1996, pp.348-9; Stanford and Brewer, 2011, p.3). Also see Figure 12. A number of reasons have been put forward to explain this.

---

## 2:6:2 HUMAN SUPREMACY OVER NATURE

---

As outlined in White's thesis the charge here is that anthropocentric values come from biblical teachings such as the creation account of Genesis. These can be read as advocating human supremacy over nature, and a role to subdue, to conquer, and to dominate the non-human creation for human ends. Empirical literature has tested this in showing how the fundamentalist tradition scores highest in measures of biblical literalism, such as the Bible being the inerrant word of God and that it should be taken literally word for word. In this sense, people in more conservative evangelical traditions may have a stronger, more literal and rigid positioning within the Judeo-Christian tradition and rate religion as having a more central importance in their lives. Although the literature mostly

---

<sup>20</sup> Protestant sects included such diverse groups as Jehovah's Witnesses, Assemblies of God, Seventh Day Adventist, Christian Science, and Quaker, amongst others, (Hand and Van Liere, 1984, p.569).

points to the strong link between biblical literalism, mastery over nature or dominion belief<sup>21</sup> and Christian fundamentalism, it should be noted that Woodrum and Hoban (1994) found that although dominion belief was a significant negative predictor of environmentalism, fundamentalism was not a strong predictor of dominion belief. Earlier studies solely interpreted conservative evangelicals' low scoring on measures of environmental concern as a result of stricter adherence to mastery over nature orientations, in line with the reasoning of White's thesis. However, several other reasons are discussed as possible causes amongst later more comprehensive studies.

---

### 2:6:3 ESCHATOLOGY

---

Guth *et al.* (1993) found conservative evangelicalism to be the strongest predictor of a lack of environmental concern: a theme which still remained when controlled under multiple regression. Building on gaps in previous interpretations, this study was the first to discuss the possibility that dispensational beliefs and End Times thinking, in addition to dominion themes, result in a lack of environmental concern for conservative evangelicals (Guth *et al.* 1993, p.377, 379). That study therefore offered a more comprehensive understanding as eschatology had not formed part of White's thesis. The thinking is that focusing upon an imminent 'Second Coming' will negate care for this-worldly concerns. It is not just the beginning of time as understood in Genesis but also the End Times as pointed to in numerous biblical passages that may lead conservative Christians towards indifference to environmental concerns. Building upon earlier work, Guth *et al.* (1995) were the first to measure eschatological beliefs in relation to environmental concern. Results showed a strong bivariate relationship between conservative eschatology, religious tradition, and less concern for the environment when people focus attention on the world to come rather than the present one (Guth *et al.* 1995, pp.368, 371, 374). Wolkomir *et al.* (1997b, p.106) also found environmental disregard was clearly linked to eschatology.

With some conservative Christians, current environmental problems are interpreted as social decay, prophesied as a sign of the imminent End Times, and such people may question whether Christians should therefore intervene. The Christian unravelling of time in a linear fashion, with a designated beginning and end, ultimately leading to the kingdom of God on earth, may also

---

<sup>21</sup> The empirical literature uses the term 'dominion belief' as synonymous with a strongly anthropocentric interpretation of the Genesis creation text, often referred to as 'domination' or 'human mastery over nature'. This is in contrast to 'stewardship beliefs' that are gleaned from an alternative interpretation of the same Scriptures.

negate concern for current issues such as the environment (Dekker, Ester and Nas, 1997, p.445). In addition, placing too much concern upon the environment has also been seen as a form of idolatry and closely associated in evangelical thinking with New Age ideas: further reasons why more conservative evangelical Christians may steer a clear path from the environmental movement.

---

#### 2:6:4 SECULAR VERSUS CHRISTIAN CULTURE WARS

---

Eric Woodrum and Michelle Wolkomir (1997, p.224) point to the culture wars of the 1960s and 70s with the radical deep ecology/environmentalist movement on one side, with associated liberal counter Christian values, and conflict with government authority and business, whilst conservative Christians maintained their position, such as upholding the law and the current status quo. Bearing this in mind, just as oil and water do not mix, it is easy to see how stalwart conservative evangelical Christians would not welcome a growing environmental concern. Such Christians may have got into a habit of opposing environmentalism in large part due to the environmental agenda being a central concern of opponents of Christianity, rather than Christians having an independent reason not to have environmental concerns. In this context it is apparent how the residue from this clash of values could still permeate conservative Christian attitudes toward the natural world, partly or wholly independent of Scripture. Greeley (1993, p.20) saw how conservative evangelicals are characterised by moral and political conservatism, which cannot incorporate environmentalism with its associated liberal and secular undertones.

Conservative churches have been active in addressing controversial social issues, as they see secular society slipping in the opposite direction to biblical teachings. In particular campaigns have centred against abortion, homosexuality, and evolution, and on attempts to include school prayer in the curriculum (Tarakeshwar *et al.* 2001, p.387). This can offer insight into why conservative evangelicals have, in the main, reacted with caution or hostility to environmental reform. For instance the environmental movement, and even the beliefs of some liberal Christian denominations supporting environmental protection, may be perceived to hold much more liberal views with issues that evangelicals campaign on. In this respect one can understand the caution evangelicals cling to when it comes to environmental ethics, as they may see it as further evidence of a slip into secularism. Tarakeshwar *et al.* (2001, p.401), finding a positive stewardship ethic and 'greener' lifestyles of clergy in the PCUSA, point to a cautionary note in that the greening of the church, rather than coming from a biblical mandate, could be nothing more than a refocusing of priorities to survive in a secular world. Furthermore, occasional eco-warrior type clergy could be using their

position as a platform to further their own political priorities. Whether or not these points are true, it is possible conservative churches may see the mere possibility as giving them extra cause for concern. Concern by conservative evangelicals may also be evident with the level of authority science disciplines gain within broader society, in contrast to biblical teachings.

---

## 2:6:5 THE SCIENCE/RELIGION DEBATE

---

Harper (2008, p.6) observes the possibility of the religion and science dichotomy being revealed in Christianity and environment discourses. Although few details are given this may be something worthy of more detailed future research. The seeming incompatibility of science and conservative Christianity, epitomised by the creation versus evolution debate, could well have filtered down into church/environment relations.

Virgil Stanford and Elizabeth Brewer (2011) also note the relationship between religion and scepticism towards science. Christopher Ellison and Marc Musick (1995, cited in Stanford and Brewer, 2011, p.6) noted that various elements of Christian theology related to distrust of science in generating knowledge. Stanford and Brewer (2011, p.6) noted how science and Christianity have come into many conflicts on issues such as evolution, birth control and climate change.

Many environmental problems rely upon evidence provided by scientific data as a basis for arguments that advocate the need for remedial action: climate change being a prime example. Paul Djupe and Gregory Gwiasda (2010), have stated how some evangelicals have been firmly entrenched with scepticism in relation to climate change, even seeing it as a ploy by Satan to turn people from evangelism to environmentalism (Djupe and Gwiasda, 2010, p.80). This fear of distraction from their core concerns even leads them to question Christians who place a high level of concern upon the environment, specifically as to where their drive originates. Sherkat and Ellison (2007, p.82) have shown how the religiously conservative have a propensity to question the level of threat posed by environmental problems and this may stem from distrust of science and/or the environmental movement and what they see as previously over-exaggerated pessimism. These issues pose an interesting area of enquiry, especially amongst creationist Christians in more conservative churches.

It may well be that a mix of the above is responsible for previous results in relation to the environmental concern of conservative evangelicals. This seems to have been the case for Boyd (1999) who, when explaining these results, points to the mixture of political and theological causes such as a concern with the End Times and salvation mixed with suspicion of a liberal and largely



secular environmental movement (Boyd 1999, p.42). Woodrum and Wolkomir's (1997, pp.231-232) study, from the 1993 GSS data, concludes that in the U.S. political conflict has had a biasing effect upon religious attitudes toward environmental concern, with conservative evangelical beliefs being politically affected.

Eckberg and Blocker (1996) particularly call for further research into what they term 'the theoretical problem of fundamentalism'. They even suggest it may not have biblical roots at all, but that religious sectarianism in some way subverts environmentalism leading to a blanket disassociation from liberal Christian and secular concerns (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996, p.353-354). They reached the following conclusion:

We cannot at this time nail down the source of the effect of fundamentalism. It could come about because of dominion statements in Genesis 1 (or other powerful religious concepts like end-times theology). It could also be that morality, biblical inerrancy, and "greenness" have all become politicised, serve as symbols of the two sides in the culture wars and therefore are statistically linked in survey research. Disentangling these possibilities will be a difficult task indeed (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996, p.354).

It needs more explicit qualitative research to successfully help understand these complex drives.

As has been noted above, the main theme permeating the literature seems to be this strong correlation between conservative evangelical Christians and less concern for the environment. As one study remarked, the often repeated song of Kermit the Frog starting with the lyrics 'it's not easy being green' could equally be applied to conservative Protestant denominations (Guth *et al.* 1993, 373). Although their reference may have been intended to have more humorous undertones, perhaps a more pertinent observation may be to ask the question as to what exactly it means to 'be green', and do such conservative Christians want to be green, should they be green and do they need to be green? Again, a more detailed qualitative study is needed to address and help understand these observations.

## 2:7 LIMITATIONS OF PREVIOUS QUANTITATIVE STUDIES AND THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

---

### 2:7:1 A LACK OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH FOCUSING UPON THE U.K.

---

Previous empirical research in Britain is extremely limited. The most detailed study focusing solely upon U.K. data was by Hayes and Marangudakis (2001) and their previous work (2000) was a cross-national study of four countries including the U.K. Research by Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel (2010 and 2011) used the data set from Pepper's previous doctoral research, which focused upon two English towns, to investigate Christian values and consumption patterns.

In their first publication, Hayes and Marangudakis (2000) used data from the 1993 ISSP environment survey, from the four nations of U.K., U.S., Canada and New Zealand and the study can be commended in being the first to move outside the U.S. These data sets are impressive in that they measure far more comprehensive measures in relation to the environment than data sets used in many previous studies, however, as noted earlier, the 1993 GSS and ISSP data sets have been overly used in the latter half of the empirical literature. Results showed Christianity as a whole to be a very weak predictor of environmental attitudes and behaviour, since Christians differed little from non-Christians. They believe identification with a Christian denomination and environmental concern cannot be explained as a straightforward dichotomy (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, pp.164-5). However results did show denominational diversity, with a larger difference being found between Catholics and Protestants than between Christians and non-Christians, though non-Christians generally seemed more environmentally concerned (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, p.165-166).

Hayes and Marangudakis (2000) raise the interesting question as to 'how and when Christian doctrines become cultural commands'? Different Christian traditions have evolved in different ways in this respect, perhaps explaining some previous differences seen in relation to Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Hayes and Marangudakis believe Catholics may value nature symbolically whilst Protestantism does so more in utilitarian and materialist terms (2000, p.160). More fundamentalist Christian traditions, such as the Puritans settling in the New World, preached against the wilderness, seeing it as physical evidence of the results of the Fall (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, p.160). Interestingly the protection of such areas is a central goal of many modern day environmental groups: a more historical example of how such denominations value nature so differently from environmentalists.

After controlling demographic variables, religious affiliation still emerged consistently linked to economic views in relation to the environment: with liberal Protestants being more pro-environmental than Catholics and conservative Protestants. This study therefore rejected the general White thesis, but agreed with a denominational diversity model, and in particular found that 'the problem of fundamentalism' though smaller in numbers of people than in the U.S., was still apparent in other countries (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000, p.170). This led them to call for more precise denominational studies, especially of fundamentalism/sectarianism, with a greater geographical diversity, to help explain reasons for this negative correlation. My own study will be the kind of precise denominational study, in a previously unstudied geographical area, that Hayes and Marangudakis called for.

Hayes and Marangudakis (2001) completed the first empirical study devoted to the U.K. based upon the 1993 British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey. In categorising religiosity this study combined identification with level of commitment, with Christians differentiated as Catholics, Anglicans, other Protestants and other Christians. In addition, atheists and non-Christians were identified. A dominion or mastery over nature orientation was used as a measure and the two most notable variables determining this were not religious but educational attainment and scientific knowledge. Four environmental measures were used in identifying the extent of dominion belief. However, upon closer scrutiny, some of these appear questionable, again due to them being gleaned from a general social survey rather than developed by the researchers themselves. These four measures include the following hypotheses: 'any change humans cause to nature is likely to make things worse'; 'almost everything we do in modern life harms the environment'; 'animals should have the same moral rights as human beings' and 'nature would be in peace and harmony if only human beings would leave it alone' (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2001, p.145). Some may see the third measure in particular more accurately identifying deep ecologists than those having a pro-dominion stance.

In contrast to most U.S. studies, atheists were significantly more likely to adopt pro-dominion beliefs than those who adhere to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and human domination of nature was not intrinsically linked to the Judeo-Christian tradition (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2001, p.146-147). Results at multivariate level showed negligible difference between Christians and non-Christians in relation to environmental attitudes. However, Roman Catholics scored more negatively, being more pro-dominion than Anglicans. Other Protestants seemed just as likely as Catholics to hold pro-dominion stances, such as Baptists, Brethren and United Reformed Church (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2001, p.151). This is the only result from this study that seems to be closer to

previous research in the U.S. in that conservative Protestants with a more literal biblical interpretation were less environmentally sensitive than liberal Protestants.

Hayes and Marangudakis (2001) attempt to explain possible reasons for the results gained for Protestants and Roman Catholics in the U.K. They offer original insight into the relationship between Christianity and nature in the U.K., in not 'blaming' the Genesis mandate, but rather a more complex orientation based upon the historical unravelling of the Christian faith within Latin Christendom (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2001, p.153). They argue that nature lost its ascetic and symbolic properties as the link between God and nature deteriorated, with historical personages such as Augustine, Abelard and Aquinas, amongst others, being responsible (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2001, p.140).<sup>22</sup> In the more recent past it could be argued that a 'loss of God' coincided with material progress and environmental decay, as in the U.K. Christianity seemed to be replaced in a linear form by deism, agnosticism, and atheism (Hayes and Marangudakis, 2001, p.140). In this sense one could well ask if it was not the lack of Christian beliefs that led to our environmental predicament rather than the faith itself. Dekker, Ester and Nas (1997, p.456) argued that the modernization processes of industrialisation, urbanization, and economic growth led to unbridled anthropocentrism, changing the humanity-nature relationship, regardless of the influences of religion. Hayes and Marangudakis (2001, p.153) call for further research especially into the reasons for denominational differences, and for more research outside the U.S.:

It is only via the use of such culturally and religiously diverse materials that not only may the relationship between religion and attitudes towards nature be comprehensively investigated, but also may the empirical validity, or its lack thereof, of the White thesis be rigorously assessed.

In keeping with the increased focus of studies in recent years, Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel (2011) assessed the link between Christianity and consumer behaviours. Based upon U.K. survey data they did find a marginal correlation between religiosity and sustainable consumer behaviour (Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel, 2011, pp.281, 284). This supports previous findings that Christians in the U.K. save more than double the average and not surprisingly hold far lower debts than the national average (Christian Research 2005, cited in Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel, 2011, p.279). This again points to more environmentally friendly frugal and anti-consumerist values being held by British Christians.

---

<sup>22</sup>Here God and nature were seen as separate entities that needed to be understood rationally and in their own right.

They call for more detailed research into specific religious beliefs about consumerism, wealth and social justice and how these affect the behaviour of consumers.

Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel also explore how religious context has an important role to play in the formation of environmentally friendly behaviours with for instance Anglican churches having 'Fair Trade' stalls which could result in more conscious and sustainable behaviours by congregants (2011, p.285). Further research again is needed in assessing the role of such influences within the church setting.

The same data set was used for their other study which highlights the importance of values in providing guides for our everyday living (Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel, 2010). Religion is an obviously rich source of values, often seen as noble, with strong ethical roots. Christianity also provides a context in which values integrate with beliefs, narratives, rituals, moral codes and emotional experiences within community contexts (Hinde, 1999, cited in Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel, 2010, p.128). Results showed how religion favours tradition, conformity and security: a general conservatism justifying and preserving the existing social order (p.143).

---

## 2:7:2 GENERAL LIMITATIONS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

---

A survey of the empirical literature has presented all the shortcomings that I have brought to light. Previous studies in the field are extremely limited geographically, largely focusing on the U.S. (Figure 2, p.15). The empirical studies rarely design and implement their own data collection activities but more often rely upon older data collected during national social surveys. They often rely on dated statistics, such as the 1993 GSS and 1993 ISSP (Figure 3, p.16). Measures of religiosity and environmental concern occasionally appear crude in comparison to a study that would specifically design its own questions (Figures 5 and 7, pp.20, 25). There is no uniformity of measures across studies, with most research gleaning two or three *ad hoc* measures from a general social survey or other data set (Figures 6 and 8, pp.21, 30). There is no larger consensus within the literature or uniformity as to how to validate results. Using national data offers general results that lack specific information that a more focused study could bring. Inconsistency in some results is no doubt due to the vast range of measures that are operationalised as environmental indicators.

A further criticism of the empirical literature is that although the analysis of data is satisfactorily completed, engagement of results with wider literature on the subject is rare. In this respect the reasons for certain results are only very briefly if at all mentioned. A more thematic

theological engagement with wider research may have yielded evidence to help explain findings that point to the negative correlation between conservative evangelical traditions and environmental concern.

Just as earlier studies were limited in respect of environmental measures, including attitudes but not behaviour, another limitation can be seen in the way environmental measures were more often than not general rather than specific. For instance, Eckberg and Blocker (1989, p.514) having a measure for general and local environmental issues noted that negative correlations found from the data for general environmental issues significantly decreased for local issues. Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach (1998, p.746) also found that respondents were more concerned about local issues than global environmental problems. It seems whether Christian or not, people may be more willing to act environmentally when it comes to things they can see and are affected by first hand. This is important to note as most of the later studies fail to incorporate specific local environmental issues into their measures. When using data from national social surveys, as many of the studies do, it is impossible to assess which environmental issues may have meaning for residents of certain areas. An important related issue is that much of the literature measures politicised forms of environmentalism rather than private acts protecting nature. This again is another issue that may help explain the seeming lack of coherence between environmental attitudes and behaviours. Research focused upon a certain locality may be able to explain the reasons for this.

---

### 2:7:3 THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SETTING, CONTEXT AND ITS FLUIDITY

---

Conrad Kanagy and Hart Nelsen (1995, p.43) believe that attitudes toward environmental concern are far more complex an issue than some of the empirical studies conclude. Things that have been previously neglected are interaction and context and there is a need for both to be included in future research. Important specific questions have rarely been addressed such as the effects of long term religious socialisation on a congregant's attitudes in contrast to influences from contemporary activities and the effects of positioning from leaders. These relationships are particularly important to understand as they offer insight into the extent to which churches and denominations can adapt to addressing present concerns. Djupe and Hunt (2009) have addressed this in a limited manner with a more focused empirical study yet there is a strong argument that the real need would be for a qualitative ethnographic study that can help explain, from first-hand observation, the mechanisms at work at the interface of Christianity and the environment.

The latest research into religion and the environment has looked into the largely neglected social dimension of religious experience rather than just possible effects of theological interpretation (Djupe and Hunt, 2009; Djupe and Gwiasda, 2010). The 2009 study analysed the effects of church membership upon environmental attitudes. Results pointed to the importance of social dissemination in the formation of environmental views rather than traditional measures of religiosity (Djupe and Hunt, 2009, p.681). A flaw of previous research has been in not considering the congregational context, with previous work looking at theoretical causes but less into real life practical manifestations. A real test of the Lynn White thesis would need more than just a test of what doctrinal positions and scriptural interpretations congregants or clergy take on certain issues, but how this is first communicated at a grass roots level and secondly the extent to which it is lived out.

Djupe and Hunt (2009, p.681) remind us that one important thing to bear in mind is that the analysis of the effects of religiosity upon the environment, is not that of a static process, but of a fluid and evolving situation. So whereas there should be an obvious link between a person's commitment to a religious tradition, exposure to its values, and personal adoption of them, the tradition in question may undergo temporal adjustment; as we can see with statements issued by a denomination. Such changes will also vary geographically. Then there are changes within individuals and effects they can have on their own congregation: it may only take one 'environmental warrior' with a strong determination in a church to steer his or her church on a path of pro-environmental stewardship. Djupe and Hunt believe they fill a gap in research by not just testing mastery over nature or stewardship beliefs from biblical interpretation but more by seeing what is going on in churches. They point to the possibility Christians may not always look for Scripture to interpret a situation and how to proceed, or if they do not know how they should act from Scripture they may engage in a 'cognitive shortcut'. For instance, watching a certain documentary, adopting the view of their pastor or church mate or other communication networks within a church could all lead to certain environmental values (Djupe and Hunt, 2009, p.678). However, this possibility may be more apparent in liberal than conservative churches.

The importance of the social setting of individual churches within a denomination was apparent from their survey of the Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church. Just as previous studies pointed to the limitation of the White thesis in as much as it was incorrect not to take account of denominational differences, this study showed that account also needs to be taken of differences between congregations within the same denomination. For instance while only 11% of respondents within a denomination believed in biblical literalism some individual churches reported

50% adherence (Djupe and Hunt, 2009, p.674). Therefore, different social settings can reinforce beliefs within a church group and religious beliefs should never be seen as independent of the social context in which they were developed. In this sense religiosity in general and specifically Christian attitudes toward the environment are partly dictated and partly constructed as there is a social influence upon religious beliefs.

The limitations of Djupe and Hunt's (2009) study lie in its sole reliance upon survey data. This study points to the great benefits an in-depth ethnographic study could make to the existing literature in being able to test such measures as the social fabric of a church in relation to the environment as qualitative research would be best suited to 'pick up' on social sources of information.

---

#### 2:7:4 METHODOLOGICAL SHORTCOMINGS AND THE NEED FOR AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

---

One criticism of most of the empirical literature is that it is a distant statistical analysis devoid of contact with the groups being studied. In this sense they are theoretical rather than practical. In manipulating variables through statistical analysis it is questionable as to the extent the researcher can trace back the exact lines of influence. For instance, to what extent can direct and indirect influences be adequately traced and differentiated? One of the dangers is drawing steadfast conclusions from this type of work only, as the social characteristics of congregations are ignored, such as numerous things that could shape attitudes toward the environment, independent of theological interpretations. For instance a church may represent a clustering of politically Conservative people whose opinions upon environmental issues may to some extent be formed independently of theological reasoning.

Much of the empirical literature encourages respondents to label themselves into certain categories, yet they do not really get an understanding of what the person or group actually believes or how they operationalise these beliefs in their daily interactions with the natural environment. The empirical literature often uses self-assessment questions that are susceptible to what is known as 'social desirability bias', where people may deliberately answer questions a certain way to make themselves look more active than they actually are. Qualitative ethnographic research techniques can help overcome this inclination by observing a situation first-hand.

A further criticism of the literature is that they all use only one research method: the statistical manipulation of data to highlight correlations. A broader study using multiple



methodologies could have helped explain in more detail the relationship between religiosity and environmental concern. Using multiple methods is common practise in social science research and again has the benefit of triangulation.

None of the studies to date actually ask Christian people directly to explain in detail their attitudes and behaviours in relation to the environment. None of the surveys have been able to ascertain how Christians themselves would describe their feelings toward the natural world and which parts of their faith they would see as most important in explaining their position. This could be achieved by close interaction with members of specific congregations using qualitative research techniques such as participant observation and semi-structured personal interviews. With previous research looking at the interface of Christianity and the environment, there is nothing yet that solely concentrates upon conservative evangelical Christians, nothing that geographically focuses upon the country of Wales, and most importantly there has been no previous in-depth ethnographic study using multiple qualitative research techniques. It is these shortcomings that I will address in my own project, ensuring originality of methodological techniques, geographical location and denominational target group focus.

## 2:8 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT USING QUALITATIVE METHODS

---

### 2:8:1 INTRODUCTION

---

There has been a paucity of published research that analyses the relationship between Christian religiosity and environmental attitudes using qualitative techniques. The literature review conducted here provides evidence that there has been no previous in-depth empirical study, using multiple qualitative techniques, of this subject, although a few more focused studies have employed some aspect of qualitative techniques, as are discussed below. As detailed earlier in this chapter, the 'four waves' model may be updated to include an embryonic 'fifth wave': those few studies that have moved away from rigid quantitative empirical analysis to incorporate qualitative research techniques of which my own thesis is a part.

These few studies that have been published include the following: Haluza-Delay (2008) conducting an auto-ethnography of his personal experience as an environmental stewardship facilitator in churches in Canada; J. Arjan Wardekker, Arthur Petersen and Jeroen van der Sluijs (2009) using discourse analysis, when looking at data such as website statements and discussions,

exploring U.S. Christian perceptions of climate change; Wilkinson's (2010b) article based upon doctoral research (2010a) resulting in her (2012) publication about U.S. evangelical perceptions of climate change, having conducted focus groups in evangelical churches in the U.S.; and DeLashmutt's (2011) study also using focus groups to assess congregant awareness of denominational climate change initiatives. In addition, Robert Fowler's (1995) now somewhat dated *'The Greening of Protestant Thought'* made use of material from interviews and conversations as part of a broader literature based study to map the American Protestant environmental terrain from 1970-1990, and Laurel Kearns (1996) used personal observation, interviews, and tape recorded speeches to assess Christian stewardship and creation spirituality in parachurch groups in the U.S. The qualitative studies therefore continue the heavily North American bias of the empirical studies outlined earlier in this chapter, with only DeLashmutt (2011) offering a geographical alternative. Other material includes Wylie Carr's (2010) MA dissertation using interviews to assess conservative Christian perceptions of climate change in the U.S. (leading to the publication of a journal article) (Carr *et al.* 2012); Peter Young's (2010) MSc dissertation also using interviews to help understand church-based environmental initiatives in Canada; and Susan Emmerich's (2003) use of interviews and observation to understand resistance to and application of environmental stewardship in church based contexts of one coastal community in the U.S., an informative overview of which is available in DVD format (Emmerich 2008).<sup>23</sup>

---

## 2:8:2 AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

---

The rare technique of auto-ethnography used by Haluza-Delay in his 'Churches Engaging the Environment: An Auto-ethnography of Obstacles and Opportunities' (2008) offers a bird's-eye view of his two decades of experience as an environmental stewardship facilitator mainly in Catholic, Mennonite and Lutheran Churches. In the method of auto-ethnography Haluza-Delay scrutinises his own experiences as a speaker, educator and activist from 1985-2006, including the classes and sermons he gave, the inserts for church bulletins he wrote, his personal journals, curriculums, lesson plans, and feedback from participants as well as numerous conversations during his years of experience (which included a period of full-time employment at a Lutheran environmental education

---

<sup>23</sup> Immediately prior to submitting this thesis I became aware of a PhD entitled 'Religion and the Environment in Northeast Nigeria: Dominion, Stewardship, Fatalism and Agency' that had just been completed at Sheffield University (2015) by Muazu Usman Shehu. The thesis employs a mixed methods approach of questionnaires and interviews to compare the environmental attitudes of Christian and Muslim congregations in Nigeria using a social scientific perspective.

centre). Grounded theory is then used to help analyse the data after coding. This research provides an important overview of actual obstacles and opportunities (and therefore potential in other contexts) for the advancement of environmental stewardship or creation care ethics in churches. This data has been used to compile Tables 1 and 2. The four group headings in Table 1 and the three in Table 2 are those used by Haluza-Delay.

TABLE 1: OBSTACLES TO FAITH BASED ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Paradigmatic	Accountability	Conviction	Critical
Certain beliefs hinder engagement	Human concerns trump non-human concerns	Personal responses	Lack of faith based societal criticism to address ecological imbalance.
Fear of being labelled 'New Age' nature worshippers or deifying the earth (heretical)	Uncertainty over what attention should be given to environment	Lifestyle choices	Western cultural world-view de-values nature and may influence biblical interpretations
How to deal with conflicting biblical interpretations	Only humans made in God's image	Economic status	
Hostility of environmental groups to Christianity	Faith individualistic rather than public: lessening corporate engagement with social issues	Level of education	
Over concern for after-life at the expense of earthly life	Evangelism most important issue	Knowledge of remedial actions	
Eschatology: a corrupt and fallen world that will pass away			

Source: Chart compiled with data from Haluza-Delay (2008), based upon multiple denominational contexts in Canada.

TABLE 2: OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAITH BASED ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Subcultural	Commitment	Public
Church activities foster learning: study groups, fellowships	Motivation from faith sources	Engagement between Christian sources and wider public discourses
Engagement with moral issues	Sense of duty	How Christian churches and traditions converse with cultural motifs
Possible exposure to creation care via denominational statements	Responsible actions	Christian message of hope
Related materials from historical denominational personages	Obligations	Community service
Sermons with practical applicability	Notions of righteousness	Christians can act counter-culturally with issues such as materialism
Accountability for church members	Moral foundations of churches	
Fostering of attitude and lifestyle changes	Issues given church attention generate sustained action	

Source: Chart compiled with data from Haluza-Delay (2008), based upon multiple denominational contexts in Canada.

Haluza-Delay observed a more engaging attitude toward environmental stewardship from Christians in younger age groups. In addition, in 1987 he had expressed feelings of ‘frustration and isolation’ in being a Christian environmentalist, yet two decades later this was not the case anymore as he had witnessed an increasing Christian attention to environmental matters (Haluza-Delay, 2008, p.79), something which he himself may well have been instrumental in fostering. His concluding remark is that for environmental stewardship to work in church based contexts, it must do so sensitively: respecting the target denominations history, Scriptures, and traditions when attending to obstacles and opportunities, if any success is to be made in catalysing change (Haluza-Delay, 2008, p.80).

As Haluza-Delay comments, opportunities and obstacles will show variation between denominations, as different sub-cultures lead to particularities (2008, p.71). Furthermore, in recognising the limited geographical niche of his own ethnography, Haluza-Delay emphasises that ‘Further research in a variety of religious contexts is recommended to develop a more

comprehensive picture of the obstacles and opportunities to developing action for the environment in such settings' (Haluza-Delay, 2008, p.73).

---

### 2:8:3 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

---

The issue of anthropogenic climate change is *the* environmental concern which at present generates the most concerted efforts for action from environmental groups.<sup>24</sup> Within the Christian community it is one issue that has gained momentum in some denominations and groups yet more broadly it generates vastly differing positions. It is closely intertwined with issues of poverty and inequality: of how humans should live in relation to broader societies and non-human creation. It is therefore not surprising that of the few studies found using qualitative techniques, a number of them focus upon this issue (Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs, 2009; Wilkinson, 2010b; DeLashmutt, 2011).

Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs (2009) conducted an 'argumentative discourse analysis' of one-hundred written and spoken statements of Christian voices in the U.S. climate change debate. This included on-line news coverage, press releases, opinion documents, resolutions, on-line debates, newspaper articles, speeches, blogs from the internet, and broader media sources. The study was broad in its denominational breadth, incorporating more than 20 groups (Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs, 2009, p.515). The study used two frameworks to aid analysis: world-views and value mapping. World-views, broken down into four discourses, were used to organise various opinions, though overlap was common. World-views include safe region, caring region, global market and global solidarity.

Value Mapping includes ideological view, problem setting and goal searching, problem solving, and outcomes and fairness. In typifying various discourses three narratives emerged (Tables 3-5).

---

<sup>24</sup> For instance, see the concerted efforts of groups like Friends of the Earth: [https://www.foe.co.uk/news/safe\\_climate\\_index](https://www.foe.co.uk/news/safe_climate_index) (Accessed: 25/5/2015)

TABLE 3: CHRISTIAN NARRATIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE: CONSERVATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

---

### Conservational Stewardship

---

- Conserving the garden of God as it was created
- Threats to this include technologies and international development

### Climate Change Narrative

- Proponents of strict climate policy
- Preserving creation of which humans are a part
- Climate change is real, humans are to blame
- Nature fragile, poor will suffer
- Ideology: created 'good', need to preserve under human jurisdiction
- Human/nature interdependence
- Extension of 'love one another' commandment to all nature
- Humans wrongfully de-creating
- Jesus Christ came for all creation
- Defining the issue: climate change results in habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, extinctions
- Remedial action: address multiple threats, on complex issues. Act with personal steps, technology not sole answer. Need for strong church leadership, critique economic growth
- Outcomes: developed nations take first responsibility for emissions. Issues of fairness, transfer technologies

Source: Chart compiled with data from Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs, (2009).

TABLE 4: CHRISTIAN NARRATIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE: DEVELOPMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

---

### Developmental Stewardship

---

- Turning the wilderness into a garden
- Technology and development necessary

### Climate Change Narrative

- Opponents of strict climate policy
- Use creation's resources for development
- Climate change sceptics: any effects distant, limited and natural
- Nature is robust and compatible with development
- Humans are not a threat
- Climate policy will hurt the poor and is a waste of money
- Ideology: humans to fill and subdue the earth, create garden from wilderness
- Nature to serve human needs
- Population growth a blessing
- Only God can catastrophically damage the earth
- Noahic Covenant: God preserving the earth
- Solutions: technology and economic development provides resources to address environmental issues
- Kyoto Protocol flawed and main result is to increase energy prices
- Eco-imperialism: forcing others to forgo luxuries we have

Source: Chart compiled with data from Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs, (2009).

TABLE 5: CHRISTIAN NARRATIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE: DEVELOPMENTAL PRESERVATION

### Developmental Preservation

- God's creation is good though changing
- Both progress and preservation need to be balanced
- God is the source of creativity that finds solutions

### Climate Change Narrative

- Proponents of strict climate policy
- More positive view of humans
- Human technological and entrepreneurial capacity overcomes preservation/development conflicts
- Developing countries should not be restricted in growth
- Nature robust up to a point
- Common with political Conservatives and recent evangelical initiatives
- Ideology: blend of progress and preservation
- Solidarity: stable climate a common good
- Should care about well-being of all humanity
- Problem setting: climate change will affect the poor most
- Impacts: morally unacceptable
- Developed countries mostly to blame, U.S. overconsumption
- U.S. should use its resources for good 'do unto others...'
- Problem solving: urgent need for action and solutions are possible
- Climate change is evidence of failed stewardship
- Calls for political leadership, 'cap and trade', new technology

Source: Compiled from Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs, (2009).

Whilst the three discourses agree on the need for stewardship of the resources bequeathed by God, they differ significantly on how this can be achieved, specifically in relation to climate change. One perhaps surprising result of the study is that no simple denominational pattern could be deduced by the authors. Many denominations bridge more than one discourse or even all three. For instance, responses by both Roman Catholics and conservative evangelical groups have called for prudence in the face of uncertainty about climate change policy, though the latter have more



strongly criticised religiously inspired advocacy (Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs, 2009, p.519). Results also note that many of the components of the above discourse are also apparent in secular views, therefore complicating the issue of tracing which points are specifically drawn from theological reasoning (Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs, 2009, p.519).

---

#### 2:8:4:1 FOCUS GROUPS WITH U.S. EVANGELICALS

---

Katharine Wilkinson has completed the most up-to-date research into U.S. evangelical attitudes towards climate change as part of a doctoral thesis (Wilkinson, 2010a, 2012) and a briefer overview of findings appears in her article (Wilkinson, 2010b). She conducted focus groups in nine white evangelical churches in the U.S. in addition to interviewing key leaders in the worldwide creation care movement such as those involved with the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN).

Evangelical responses to climate change in the U.S. have been varied, yet the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI), calling for positive action to combat climate change, has grown substantially from being endorsed by 86 evangelical leaders in 2006 to some 260 by 2010, substantially representing around 25-30% of the U.S. evangelical population (Wilkinson, 2010b, p.48). The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) also responded in similar tones to address global warming as part of a broader creation care initiative. These responses would fall into the developmental preservation grouping of Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs (2009) and can be seen as, according to Wilkinson, growing out of a forty year Christian engagement with the environment, initially spawned by the Lynn White debate (Wilkinson, 2010b, p.49). Such responses draw upon eschatology in a positive light; for instance focusing on a transformation of creation from old to new rather than its destruction. Although in part advocating similar strategies to secular climate initiatives, evangelical responses seek to be specifically within Christian narratives, giving it a distinctive position. This includes the use of biblical texts such as advocating stewardship, notions of the sin of environmental degradation, and caring for humanity affected by climate change.

Wilkinson's results aid our understanding of how climate change has become a polarising battle ground in U.S. evangelical circles, often having more political than theological undertones. Conservative evangelicals, normally in association with the Republican Party, have had a sceptical response to climate initiatives. Groups such as the Cornwall Alliance are at the forefront of this, falling into Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs's (2009) developmental stewardship category. Claims are made that climate change is based upon false science, that its initiatives will punish the poor and should be resisted. What is of profound importance is Wilkinson's suggestion that the sole

issue of climate change has resulted in evangelicals positioning themselves in two opposing camps and that this could have far greater repercussions for more general Christian creation care (Wilkinson, 2010b, pp.52-53). As some evangelicals entrench themselves against climate advocacy, this can catalyse deeper distrust and hostility to the development of broader evangelical engagement with environmental issues. This seems clear in looking at the Cornwall Alliance's website that boldly entitles its resources 'Resisting the Green Dragon'.<sup>25</sup> Here responses to environmental issues from Christian circles are even seen as signs the church has been infiltrated by paganism, that people need rescuing from such concerns, and that they may have satanic origins (Wanliss, 2010). The fact that measures to combat climate change require political action leads to the debate between evangelicals in the U.S. being highly politically charged.

Wilkinson also found that despite the ECI initiatives a gulf existed between denominational positioning and declarations, and the attitudes of congregants in specific spheres. Firstly, scientific and cultural scepticism impede concern. Here an off-shoot of the creation/evolution debate engenders populist anti-science sentiments amongst lay evangelicals. In addition, it may be that climate change is seen as a dominant secular cultural motif, and evangelicals often position themselves in a culturally sceptical or counter-cultural frame. Secondly, conservative political ideology often sees climate change as a small issue based upon questionable evidence and asserts that policy to curb emissions would cause economic harm, whilst Democrats frame climate change as more of an issue requiring attention. Many of the issues raised by Wilkinson also emerged in the review of empirical research addressed in Chapter 2, yet her work offers a greater depth of understanding, such as her third finding with 'questions of scale'. Here there is a resistance to systemic thinking and broader social structures leading to a lack of concern for larger scale global or biospheric issues such as climate change as immediate relationships and local concerns garner greater concern. Here evangelicals see themselves responsible for their personal actions and relationships but not in being subject to global governance and initiatives such as are mandated by regulatory climate initiatives (Wilkinson, 2010b, p.53). Wilkinson's research concludes that the dominant assumption of Christian anti-environmentalism, resulting mainly from scriptural interpretations of Genesis dominion texts and eschatology, actually did not play an important part in the results of her focus groups. Climate change initiatives permeated the left and centre part of the evangelical spectrum but not the right. Although the higher echelons of the left and centre advocate a strong climate concern, this has not yet broadly dispersed at a grass roots level, of which many

---

<sup>25</sup> The Cornwall Alliance is a coalition of U.S. conservative evangelical voices that strongly critique both the environmental movement and Christian engagement with environmental issues such as climate change. For an overview see <http://www.cornwallalliance.org/>

churchgoers will still harbour views more akin to their conservative evangelical brethren. This incongruence between the position of leaders in evangelical subsets of Christianity in the U.S. and the layperson has also been witnessed in the largest denominational group in the U.K.

---

#### 2:8:4:2 FOCUS GROUPS WITH BRITISH ANGLICANS

---

DeLashmutter (2011) conducted focus groups in six Anglican churches in the diocese of Truro, U.K., to examine the extent to which the Church of England's (C of E) policies and initiatives on environmental stewardship more generally, and climate change specifically, had adequately manifested in the local church context. The C of E makes for a good case study in this respect as it has repeatedly addressed issues of environmental stewardship in a positive light in declarations and policy documents from the 1960s to the present (DeLashmutter, 2011, p.64-68). Participants were encouraged to express their attitudes, feelings, beliefs and experiences about the church and the environment. Results showed that despite concerted efforts by the higher echelons of the church this had not resulted in increased concern or even awareness of the churches' position amongst lay people (DeLashmutter, 2011, pp.71-72). These results are perhaps surprising in that lethargy over engagement with environmental stewardship cannot solely be compartmentalised as a conservative evangelical shortcoming and not only amongst churches that may have no denominational leadership on the issue, but even those that occupy more of the middle ground and do have leadership.

However, DeLashmutter did decipher three narratives from his results that possibly foster environmental engagement. Firstly, what is deemed a 'folk theology' emerged. Creation was seen as a beautiful gift inspiring awe and wonder. Yet God's perfect creation is made woefully imperfect by human use and abuse. This then leads to the second theme of 'environmental sin'. Here the way nature is used and abused is tantamount to sin that can foster an attitude of resistance to wasteful technologies and the 'throw-away society', and the need for individual and corporate repentance. The third area emerged as themes of 'environment and mission'. Here environmental decay is seen as an issue requiring attention, calling for clearer teaching at a grass-roots level, not just denominational statements. In addition, the promotion of environmental stewardship is seen as an aid for missions and evangelising: by bringing the gospel to people with the added message of the Church's love for God and his creation. In this respect it is believed the gospel takes on a more contemporary feel.

Although the official C of E position on environmental concern has been one of the strongest Christian voices, and initiatives and stances have evolved in positive ways, communication of this to the broader Church has been largely ineffective. DeLashmutt therefore calls for intentional and creative measures to consistently link the Churches' hierarchy with the local level of parish context (DeLashmutt, 2011, p.79).

## 2:9 CONCLUSION

---

Chapter 2 has shown how previous empirical work addressing the Christianity and environment relationship has been overwhelmingly quantitative in nature. This body of literature also has a heavily North American bias, with many studies having relied upon older data sets, such as from national social surveys, that were not specifically designed for testing the relationships that they are used for in this context of Christianity and the environment. Few of these quantitative studies, only 11%, focus upon churches, therefore generalising about larger constituents without understanding what might be happening at a more focused grass-roots level (Figure 4). They attempt to find statistical relationships but do not attempt to offer a detailed explanation of why these are so, being unable to present further evidence.

As we have seen with the quantitative studies discussed above, statistics can provide a summary of certain behaviours, how these may change and relationships between them, but there is the potential for a huge gap between these results and the real situation they testify to represent (Shipman, 1997, p.110). In converting complex behaviours into numerical calculation, statistical research can lose a great deal of meaning behind the behaviours they present. The ethnographic methodology aims to demystify this. As the few qualitative studies above have shown, there is a great potential for research using these methods to provide greater understanding of the Christianity and environment relationship.

Previous quantitative studies point to conservative evangelicals or 'fundamentalist' Christians as scoring below other groups or denominations in relation to environmental concern, yet they do not provide an analysis of how adherence to a biblical world-view could result in such outcomes. My own research will attempt to unpack this in far greater detail. Likewise, previous research shows that proportionately far fewer Christians are members of mainstream environmental groups, but I will attempt to clarify why this is the case and also uncover alternative ways in which Christians do value the environment and other ways in which they might be active in promoting

environmental sensitivity or otherwise. We could ask the question that needs to be asked by future research such as my own, 'Are conservative evangelicals the real villain when it comes to environmental concern?', as some of the quantitative studies seem to suggest. My own research will also attempt to understand far more deeply the possible causes of the negative correlation between conservative evangelicalism and the environment, causes only briefly mentioned in previous quantitative studies: human supremacy over nature, eschatology, secular/Christian culture wars and the science/religion debate. To see the relationship between conservative evangelicalism and creation more deeply, what is needed is a study that can directly observe and then question representative people, and data which can then be analysed and presented as tangible and credible evidence.

Religiosity measures used in previous qualitative studies have also been shown to be problematic, with inconsistency between studies and evidencing a lack of insider knowledge. In addition, previous empirical studies only use a small number of indicators to test environmental attitudes and behaviours (with 62% using two or three and a further 29% using four, Figure 8, p.30), whereas a broader ethnographic study incorporating observation and open interviews could allow a possible multitude of environmental themes to emerge. Even with previous qualitative work there has been a focus upon climate change rather than allowing the emergence of broader environmental themes. Furthermore, the measures used in previous quantitative studies often assess more politicised forms of environmentalism rather than personal engagement with nature, such as private acts that affect the environment in some way. Previous work looks at theoretical causes of environmental attitudes rather than real life practical manifestations, whereas ethnographers can pick up on numerous social sources of information. Kanagy and Nelsen in particular called for interaction and context to be focused upon in future studies (1995, p.43). What is needed is a far more open investigation to pick up on potentially important sources of information, one that is not 'bound' by the very general and brief arguments of White (1967).

Very few studies, from both quantitative and qualitative previous research, focus upon the U.K. None of the studies to date actually ask Christian people directly to explain in detail their attitudes and behaviours in relation to the environment, such as their feelings in relation to creation, and the importance they see their Christian faith and biblical interpretation being in this. I will address these limitations of previous work, which have been presented earlier in this chapter and summarised in this conclusion, by conducting an in-depth qualitative case study of Welsh conservative evangelical Christians and their environmental attitudes and behaviours.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

---

### 3:1 INTRODUCTION: THE FORESHADOWED PROBLEM

---

The literature review in Chapter 2 provided a clear rationale for the need of a qualitative ethnographic study to collect original data to help understand the relationship between evangelicalism and creation or the environment. The ‘foreshadowed problem’<sup>26</sup> or questions to be addressed include the following: How do conservative evangelicals value and understand the created world or natural environment around them? How and why do they engage or disengage with environmental issues and where do they see the role of evangelical Christians, individually, or corporately as churches, with regards to environmental concern? What part does their Christian life and biblical interpretation play in the formation of their attitudes and behaviours in relation to what they see as the created world? Is the Bible, as lived out by conservative evangelicals, an ‘environmentally friendly’ text? To what extent is this ‘text’ embedded in the lives of its evangelical readers, guiding action in relation to the earth’s environment? Are conservative evangelicals less caring than others in their views about the environment (as the quantitative literature suggests)? If they are, then it needs to be explained why and in what particular ways.

This project is inter-disciplinary and although theological questions are central to the research questions, so are those of anthropology, sociology/social sciences, cultural studies, congregational studies and environmental studies. Within theology, a project such as this covers areas such as practical theology in how theological enquiry relates to specific contemporary issues and systematic theology in what the Bible has to say, as interpreted by conservative evangelicals, about creation and environmental concern. Practical theology has been more precisely defined:

Its perspective on, and beginning-point in, human experience and its desire to reflect theologically on that experience...it seeks to explore the complex dynamics of particular situations in order to enable the development of a transformative and illuminating understanding of what is going on within these situations (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.v).

Such social research processes have been described as a way of clarifying what is going on and to make this public, which could lead to further debate, criticism and ultimately change (Shipman, 1997, p.vii). With the literature review pointing toward a clear causal link between adherence to evangelical theological interpretations and lower environmental concern and behaviour, a task of

---

<sup>26</sup> The ‘foreshadowed problem’ was a term first used by Malinowski (1922), (cited in Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.21) and refers to the issues, problems or questions that underpin a research project.

practical theology might be to ascertain if what appears to be happening is actually happening and why? Furthermore, an ontological question might focus upon finding out if people's behaviour and 'ways of being in the world' are shaped by their interactions in the world (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.8), in this case interactions in church or other social media, or are behaviours more strictly linked to adherence to a book or manual, namely the Bible? Such questions also evidence an epistemology in claims to how we know what might be 'going on' in such situations.

This accurate formation of a research problem, as has just been documented, is the driving force behind the research endeavour and precedes the selection of research methods, or in other words validates the reasoning for choosing such methods (Fetterman, 2010, p.3). The current chapter's title 'research methods' was chosen rather than the traditional title of 'methodology' as theoretical debate now places the term 'methodology' in relation to different approaches to research within a discipline rather than the specific tools used to collect data (Cameron *et al.* 2005, p.19; Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.74-75). For this study the methodology is ethnographic and rooted in anthropology.

### 3:2 THE ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY

---

The term 'ethnography' emerged in the later nineteenth-century, used by anthropologists studying local cultures (Erickson, 2011, p.44). Ethnography is a form of empirical work which enables the study of people's lives: human experience, human activities and ways of living (Taylor, 2002, p.1). This type of research is 'qualitative' in nature, or rather focuses upon the qualities of an entity, what processes are happening and what meanings we can attach to these, rather than 'quantitative' research focusing upon quantities, frequencies or the measurable (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.8). Qualitative research has obvious benefits; to foster links between theory and practice, with much traditional academic work relying heavily upon theory, being book based, and lacking practical engagement with the world; to offer original insights to communities little researched; particularly with congregational studies, to help the group studied evaluate their position on certain issues in particular or their life and goals in general (Davies 2005; cited in Cameron *et al.* 2005, p.5).

Ethnographic research does not claim to be able to establish scientific laws as in the natural sciences, with controlled experimental techniques. Indeed, the production of universal laws is not a desirable goal of qualitative research, but rather studies of one situation can be used to speak of what may or may not be happening in another. Yet it should also be noted that science itself, being

an incomplete discipline involved in a gradual 'reducing of untruth', can never claim absolute fixed truths (Neuman, 2011, p.22). Just as with scientific endeavour, ethnography can claim to be a rigorous enterprise with systematic data collection techniques and analysis that enable claims to be made backed up by empirical evidence. In addition, the level of detail and understanding that can be gained from one qualitative case study can be far deeper than that gained by statistical studies that engage broadly rather than deeply. The fluid nature of institutions and relationships also means that qualitative data can be heavily contextual and subject to change (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.19), and have a complexity that is not reducible to numbers or statistics as with quantitative research (Richards, 2010, p.34). Qualitative studies also have the potential to engage sensitive topics amongst difficult to reach populations (Heath and Hindmarsh, 2003, p.126): something of paramount importance for my own research. Despite these benefits, the historical development of qualitative research as a respected discipline has been somewhat problematic in a world which held positivist scientific endeavours as 'crowning achievements of Western civilisation', (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.2). However, both quantitative and qualitative research can be accepted under the auspices that both have contributed to understanding more deeply the world in which we live. Being aware of what marks the quality of a project can also positively influence research being undertaken.

Clive Seale (2000) has argued that a project can be improved by addressing several issues such as the following: 'Does it have external validity or replicability?'; 'Are findings reliable and trustworthy with clear links between data and arguments?'; 'Have enough rich descriptions been provided?'; 'Is there an awareness of the methodological implications of particular decisions?'; 'Is there an effort to 'give voice' to the researched rather than impose a certain world-view?'; 'Is there a moral commitment to aid intersubjective understanding?' and 'Is there an effort to triangulate methods and data and to seek out and account for negative instances?' (Seale, 2000, pp.1, 14-15, 31, 32, 40, 49, 54, 73, 118). Others have emphasised such things as spelling out the limitations of a project, in effect its boundaries, as adding to a convincing piece of research and the need to make evidence public that genuinely reflects a reality, to make convincing cases in light of previous research, and add to knowledge of how and why humans act as they do (Shipman, 1997, p.viii).

Questions of subjectivity and objectivity are one area where qualitative research can be open to scrutiny and criticism: objectivity is somewhat impossible to guarantee as there is no totally detached place available to those engaged in qualitative research, and therefore questions of subjectivity need to be taken seriously (Shipman, 1997, p.18). Others see this in asking the question 'Do ethnographers represent some independent reality or create some social world through their work?' (Hammersley, 2002, p.67). It is not claimed that the writing of an 'ethnography' can ever be



totally free from 'partiality', particularly because the researcher who has chosen the research problem also chose what evidence to collect, from whom and by what means. It is then this particular individual who translates and analyses this data, and who ultimately chooses what to include or leave out when they write results in their own particular style. The ethnographer therefore has to act responsibly with the great power attached to taking what people have said and reassembling this to present to other audiences (May, 2003, p.20). However, processes of reflexivity and self-awareness, openness and peer review, can help alleviate potential dangers that may exist. Such reflexive processes need to be aware of how the researcher's own beliefs, interests and experiences might affect the research (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.128). One way of nullifying potential dangers this can entail is by declaring such values, like declaring baggage on arrival at an international airport; to offer it for scrutiny, and make it tangible for others to see (Richards, 2010, p.23). For myself this is a particularly valid point: having a previous academic background in studying environmental ethics and having a concern for the environment, previously knowing about the Lynn White paper and the debate surrounding this, in combination with dwelling upon results uncovered during the literature review, such as the negative correlation between conservative evangelicalism and environmental concern, undoubtedly affected my desire to conduct the project and also at times my emotions in relation to the Christian faith.

The analysis that will form the bulk of Chapters 5-7 can be broadly located within 'grounded theory'. Formulated by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), grounded theory enabled researchers to inductively generate theory from their data without being aligned to the positivist paradigm and therefore at the time offered a credibility and legitimacy to non-quantitative studies, therefore gaining the ability to be 'judged by its own canons' (Charmaz, 2014, p.8). Whereas scientific disciplines sought 'facts' to the exclusion of such things as values and beliefs, interpretive methods such as grounded theory ask more epistemological questions with a concern for values and beliefs and their construction in the social world (Shipman, 1997, p.11; Eisenhardt, 2002, pp.5-8). Grounded theory therefore set out to provide a template for aiding the development of linkages between data that had been collected and theory that could be developed from this (Seale, 2000, pp.87-91). This could involve 'peddling' multiple times between data and emergent theory; or successive layers of analysis which then results in an abstract theoretical understanding (Charmaz, 2014, p.4). Grounded theory can be termed inductive: incorporating observation, reflection, abstract thinking, and formulating theoretical ideas from the ground up, that can explain and predict (Neuman, 2011, pp.70, 73). The goal is not just a descriptive report of 'what I saw and heard', which could be seen as synonymous with the early Chicago school of anthropology and ethnography, but rather to gain proficiency during the project and data analysis stage in engaging with and

formulating theoretical concepts and analytical frameworks. In addition, illustrative examples of data are selected so readers can understand which data concepts are referring to.

Constant comparison became another technique of grounded theory and has been described as 'a systematic tool for developing and refining theoretical categories and their properties' (Seale, 2000, p.96). The aim here is to move analysis beyond reporting categories or different coding towards a more profound theoretical understanding, and I will achieve this with the aid of a model of theological reflection. Specifically in relation to coding, differentiation was made by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990): open coding, the initial creation of categories through examination of data; axial coding, the examination of how a selected category relates to other categories; and selective coding, where core categories are identified and their importance amplified in relation to other categories. It is at this point that theory creation becomes more highly developed. It is easy to see how a combination of theoretical sampling and constant comparison can produce work of considerable scope. Resultant theory can order experience with concepts, select relevant representative data to use from databases that often become too large, condense and organise, offer insights into why people may do what they do, clarify thinking, extend understanding, deepen debate and enrich an analysis (Neuman, 2011, pp.55-56). It has been suggested that the best theory to formulate is that which has a simplicity, that is straightforward and not complex, with the word 'parsimony' often being used in describing such theory (Eisenhardt, 2002, pp.30-31; Neuman, 2011, p.57; Richards, 2010, p.146).

To most accurately gain a more detailed understanding of the relationship between the conservative evangelical faith and the environment, and to address limitations uncovered in previous research, from a very early stage in formulating this project it was decided that ethnography with interviewing would be the research method. This also gave me the opportunity to use my own previously developed skills and resources.<sup>27</sup> The interpretive lens was clearly needed, as Shipman (1997) has argued: 'The human social world can only be understood through getting to know the way those involved have given meaning to events' (Shipman, 1997, p.12). Qualitative methods allow the most intimate intricacies to emerge that are beyond scientific endeavours, allowing behaviours and the thought processes behind them to be understood.

Being a qualitative study it was decided that this research would entail one year of fieldwork (normal in traditional anthropological research) in addition to a pilot study. This would enable data

---

<sup>27</sup> Such as previously having worked as an interviewer for the National Centre for Social Research; having gained an MA in Environment, Policy and Society; and having experience with the evangelical Christian faith in North Wales.

from multiple sources to be collected to help address the foreshadowed problem from different angles. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) define traditional anthropological fieldwork as 'Living with a group of people for extended periods, often over the course of a year or more, in order to document and interpret their distinctive way of life, and the beliefs and values integral to it' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.1). Although fieldwork for this study did not include 'living with people', it did involve regular weekly contact with communities over a protracted period of time which enabled the gathering of rich data sets to show how they view and relate to the world around them. This 'local' interpretation of life can be described as the 'emic' or insider's view. The ethnographer therefore opens the door or illuminates something that had previously been little understood and with the process of analysis moves into the 'etic' stage via the use of interpretive lenses such as theories, models or hypothesis (Cameron *et al.* 2005, p.29). This 'cultural interpretation' reveals a societal sub-set to a broader society who may be unfamiliar with it (Cameron *et al.* 2005, p.29). This has also been described as a way of 'lifting the veil' to see what is really going on (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.vi), or attempting to understand the social and cultural contexts within which individuals or groups are embedded and how they shape their own world (Gerson and Horowitz, 2003, p.205).

Institutions, such as a workplace, have been described as places where an 'ideological language of institutional discourse' can permeate members and be disclosed in such encounters as an interview (May, 2003, p.26). For this study the settings are churches, or groups of people, and institutions (such as churches) have been described as 'Stable social forms—of all sizes and types—that contribute to the formation of dispositions: inclinations of action, thought, embodiment, interpretation, belief, interaction and speech' (Bielo, 2009, p.11). A church can therefore be seen as an arena where knowledge and values are formed and disseminated and church groups have been described as 'A site where individuals are able to critically and reflexively articulate the categories of meaning and action that are central to their spiritual and social life' (Bielo, 2009, p.12). Church settings are therefore a powerful medium for research into social attitudes and behaviours and have the ability to provide valuable information about the relationship between evangelicalism and environmental attitudes. As has been claimed for all types of institutions, 'Researchers can take advantage of data as opportunities for opening up dimensions of the institutional regime that were not recognized at the outset of the project' (May, 2003, p.28). Such institutions can have a text or texts which co-ordinate, regulate, standardize and unify (May, 2003, p.34), with the Bible being obvious for this project. Yet any regulating texts can be open to different readings and interpretation; and readers have therefore been described as 'agents of the text' or 'collaborators in creating meaning' (Lincoln and Guba, 2002, p.227). My fieldwork will answer the question as to the

extent this was evident for biblical interpretation and environmental themes. Furthermore, the complexity of how individuals or groups negotiate a positioning between themselves and the broader contemporary cultural capital they find themselves in, is a crucial point to explore for the field researcher of communities (May, 2003, p.38). This is particularly poignant for my research as conservative evangelicalism, steeped in an unyielding biblical world-view, negotiates a path with broader society in which environmental concerns are being elevated.

Before engaging with the field it is of paramount importance for those researchers conducting qualitative research to address ethical issues and undergo ethical review, if those taking part are to be adequately protected, according to the World Health Organisation (2009, cited in Sieber and Tolich, 2013, p.1). In different ways human subjects can be vulnerable and research projects engaging with human subjects therefore open up the possibility of risk (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.103). It is the benefit which allows a small element of risk or what has been termed a 'risk-benefit assessment' to exist (Sieber and Tolich, 2013, p.22). The potential risks and benefits to those taking part and to broader society therefore need to be seriously evaluated (Neuman, 2011, p.143). Central to such ethical considerations are adherence to the practice of informed consent, that people have the right to be informed about what the research will entail and how it may affect them, and that they are not being deceived; privacy and confidentiality; and reporting of accurate data free from fabrications, omissions and contrivances (Christians, 2011, pp.65-66).

Key ethical issues for this project were anonymity and confidentiality. Joan Sieber and Martin Tolich (2013, p.153-55) differentiate between these, defining anonymity in that the researched will be given no unique identifiers from taking part and with confidentiality referring to agreements with those taking part as to what can be done with data they have given. For instance a publication has the potential to hurt those being researched (Shipman, 1997, p.40). In this respect ethical deliberation is a moral issue with great authority vested in the researcher who 'has the power to shape and determine particular and often powerful versions of social reality' (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.104). The researcher also has to deliberate ethically about the future: for instance how one's research project may be interpreted and used. Particularly in relation to future work by other academics, the way results of one project can be used by others can result in a betrayal of confidences as outsiders make whatever they will of another person's data (May, 2003, p.19). Such possibilities in many ways lay beyond the control of an author although it brings into focus the importance of presenting results in a way that minimises the risk of them being taken out of context. Yet the fear of such eventualities also has to be balanced within the ethnographer's mindset, as too

much caution would possibly lead to the filtering out of results that were deemed to have negative dissonance (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2003, p.152).

This project underwent ethical review by the University of Chester's Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee. This procedure, both the process of application and review, has been known to improve projects, to make them more methodologically rigorous and avoid problems (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.109). Specific recommendations from the Ethics Committee after reviewing the project, that I satisfactorily responded to, were in relation to how interview respondents would be screened or chosen, how the views of a small community would be protected and their anonymity guaranteed, and how the Participant Information Sheet be revised to provide more in-depth information as to what topics would be covered during interview. The project was then given final approval and fieldwork commenced. I will now give a brief historical and doctrinal overview of the roots of the churches that respondents were selected from, before discussing my engagement with them as an ethnographer.

---

### 3:3 ENGAGING WITH CHURCHES

---

---

#### 3:3:1 BACKGROUND TO CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICALISM IN WALES

---

Situations have cultures and histories, they occur within particular contexts which often have their own traditions and expectations and they contain specific forms of practice that again themselves contain history, tradition, theology and social experiences and expectations ... all human practices are historically grounded and inherently value-laden (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, pp.16, 19).

It has been suggested that of all the countries of the world few have witnessed the effects of Christianity to the same extent as Wales (Davies, 2002, p.12). From 1735 to 1860 Wales experienced multiple religious revivals, then again in 1904-1905. The national census of 1851 showed that as a proportion of the population, church attendance was much higher in Wales than in England (Davies, 2002, pp.88-89). Indeed, the Religious Census of 1851 showed that 75% of the Welsh population were aligned to Nonconformist denominations (Williams, 1991, p.64). However, although the early twentieth-century witnessed the last great revival in Wales, in 1904-1905, after this Christianity was in a deteriorating state in the principality. It was in light of this situation, that by the mid-twentieth century, the roots of the EMW can be traced.

From the mid-1940s onwards, many ministers in Wales felt that the denominations they belonged to no longer adhered to the fundamental truths of the Christian faith that were once preached from the pulpits of their own denominations. In particular, the growth of the ecumenical movement became a fashionable trend. This joining together became a primary drive in many denominations at the expense of doctrinal standards that became liberal enough to incorporate vastly different beliefs. Many ministers felt their position as an evangelical Christian was no longer tenable in their own denominations and saw separation and the forming of independent churches as the solution. In the 1960s and 70s especially, many ministers in the Presbyterian Church of Wales (formerly Welsh Calvinistic Methodists), left the denomination as they saw its slip into liberality and support for the WCC. Activities such as engaging in joint campaigns with the R.C. Church and denying the need to be born again caused alarm.<sup>28</sup> It was in this light that the formation of the EMW in 1955 as an umbrella organisation can best be understood (Davies, 1984, p.6). As self-stated, the EMW is not a denomination or association, but rather an organisation led by church leaders to be a servant of gospel churches (EMW 2015).<sup>29</sup>

The EMW defines Christian identity in the following way:

Those, and only those, who, professing faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, as Saviour, Lord and God, whose death in their place constitutes the only ground of their salvation, have forsaken their sin and now seek to live a life of holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit (Davies, 1984, p.22).

The belief is that people can have assurance of their eternal salvation in this life as they respond with belief to the grace given them by God. The EMW has a strongly conservative evangelical nature as an organisation and promotes exclusive doctrinal positions that affiliates must adhere to such as separatism. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a stalwart of Welsh evangelicalism and his own definition of the word evangelical identified three areas: the final authority of the Bible, the prominence of the 'saving gospel' therein, and the importance of a holy life (Gibbard, 2002, p.111).

Churches affiliating to the EMW bear witness to a oneness, yet see it as their biblical duty to have no association with churches or denominations who deny the clear gospel of Jesus Christ.

---

<sup>28</sup> For this section main sources of information have included informal conversations during fieldwork with church pastors and elders who either had personal experience of leaving a denomination or had worked closely with those that had done so. As is discussed later in Chapter 4, conservative evangelicals see being born again, or having a spiritual birth, a birth from above, as being a core tenet of their faith (see John 3:3).

<sup>29</sup> For more detailed information about the EMW see their website at (<http://www.emw.org.uk>). Also see Fielder (1983), Davies (1984), and Gibbard (2002).

Churches affiliated to the EMW cannot be in association with the ecumenical movement (Davies, 1984, p.24). However, the EMW does not like to be labelled 'fundamentalist'. They believe that amongst evangelicals in the U.S. the sin of schism (or regenerated Christians separating from each other) has been apparent over minor differences. This is one reason the term 'fundamentalist' has negative connotations and is mostly used by non-believers or liberal Christians who wish to mock those with evangelical concerns they do not share. For this reason, this thesis uses the term 'conservative evangelical' Christian as the most accurate label, a term which those taking part in the study support, and this has been discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1, p.5. In addition, in the presentation of data in Chapters 5-7, the term 'conservative evangelical' is repeatedly used and it is reiterated here that, for the purposes of presenting data, 'conservative evangelical' is applied as a label for the target group of those churches taking part in the study. I do not claim that all Christians who see themselves as conservative evangelicals adhere to identical positions, and I am therefore not referring to a broader subset of the Christian tradition. However, I believe results would have been very similar in other AECW churches for instance, amongst other groups, as is discussed further in Chapter 9, p.281.

The EMW seeks to serve the church and believers in Wales in numerous ways. Historically, this has included attempts to restore it to scriptural standards, such as by providing Bible-based, gospel-centred resources. This includes organising such events as summer camps and pastoral conferences; supporting mission and evangelism; organising the printing of Christian books and literature through the EMW Press and promoting these abroad; running numerous Christian bookshops in Wales; running theological training courses for training ministers and Christians wishing to deepen their Christian understanding; representing evangelical positions to secular organisations and promoting prayer for Wales (EMW 2015).

By the late 1980s the number of independent evangelical churches in Wales was growing and the need for a closer fellowship led to the creation of the Associating Evangelical Churches of Wales (AECW). In 1989 there were 35 associating churches and at present there are 57 in the whole of Wales, 12 of which are in North Wales (Figure 13, p.76).<sup>30</sup> Three of the four churches selected as case studies for this project are members of the AECW whilst the pilot study church, on the vast majority of issues, held similar conservative evangelical principles, although was not a member.

---

<sup>30</sup> The AECW website details member churches (<http://www.aecw.org.uk>). Wales is broken down into 11 clusters or regions, totalling 57 churches. Three of these regions cover North Wales (North-East, North-West and Wrexham), totalling 12 churches. However, it should be noted that numerous other doctrinally similar churches exist that have not officially joined the AECW.

---

### 3:3:2 SITUATING MYSELF AS A RESEARCHER

---

Some would argue that the insiders in a religious organisation are too immersed in its culture and beliefs to be objective about their practice. Others would argue that outsiders can never fully understand what is going on and will only pick up on the things that seem 'strange' to them (Cameron *et al.* 2010, p.73).

It is important for any researcher engaging in ethnographic research to be aware of who they are in relation to those being studied. For a project covering Christian communities I believe this is of especial importance. For self-reflexivity this may involve a simple answering of the question of 'who am I' and how the community react to this: with specific reference to 'insider' or 'outsider'. I rarely had to deal with the question 'Are you a Christian?' as most people seemed to take it for granted; through prior knowledge of me with members of two churches in particular; perhaps word of mouth in others; through observation of me taking part occasionally in services or of particularly giving a public testimony in another. For the purposes of documenting to the reader here, I was brought up as a church attending Catholic and attended a R.C. primary and secondary school until the age of 14. I moved away from the church as a teenager, became interested in various other religions in my early twenties and desiring to see less religious conflict I developed a multi-faith perspective. Yet by my mid-twenties this had run its course within my own thinking. More importantly in trying to find commonalities between faiths, I found certain teachings in some non-Christian traditions untenable. After studying various religions which incorporated travel to places such as the Middle East, India and the Philippines, having a number of 'supernatural' encounters with God and in particular having friendships with Pentecostal Christian believers, I eventually became a committed Christian and started attending evangelical churches. Prior to my own conversion I had a background—both a personal and academic interest—in the environment. My own understanding is that incorporating this interest in the environment with my faith as a Christian, placed me in an enviable position to be able to conduct the project; being an 'insider' of both areas of focus, therefore having a deeper insight into the crossroads where they meet. Brian Malley, in his anthropological study *'How the Bible Works'*, also stated how his own church background was a 'tremendous help' in being able to understand what was going on within churches (Malley, 2004, p.34).<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>For a far more detailed analysis of the benefits of Christian researchers conducting anthropological studies of Christian communities, see Brian Howell's article (2007).



Fieldwork for this study involved participant observation during church services and church related activities and was conducted over a period of 15 months, which started in late 2011 and finished in the spring of 2013. Participant observation offered a general overview of church life and access to collect more specific data sets. For instance, a written record of hymns used during services: a central theme in how evangelicals praise and worship God and positively affirm truths of their faith. Attending also enabled the writing up of sermons presented each week: being a main way that teaching and spiritual growth takes place and how this permeates from the top down with pastoral leadership. It also enabled contact to be made with potential participants for the conducting of interviews during the end of each church placement. Although themes about creation were only a marginal issue within hymns and sermons, and environmental concern not really featuring,<sup>32</sup> the direct nature of interviews allowed a focus upon these specific areas via several open questions and therefore provided a centrally important set of data for this project. Research also involved attending a number of special presentations that were deemed relevant, such as on creationism and a Christian Conference that runs annually each summer, attended by conservative evangelicals.

The target group for the research focus was conservative evangelical churches in North Wales. A main finding of the literature review was the causal link between Christianity and lower environmental concern that was most vividly expressed within strongly evangelical groups, the study of which has been seriously neglected. The choice of churches in North Wales was also made for the following reasons: feasibility with travel arrangements as I was living in the same geographical area; having a prior knowledge as to the current situation with evangelicalism within Wales; and having numerous contacts within conservative evangelical circles in the area. Being a nation with a strong Christian heritage (though more recently in decline), combined with having an interesting and diverse natural environment also made Wales an ideal choice. With the desire to focus upon conservative evangelical churches those associated with the EMW and AECW became the obvious choice (see Figure 13, p.76).

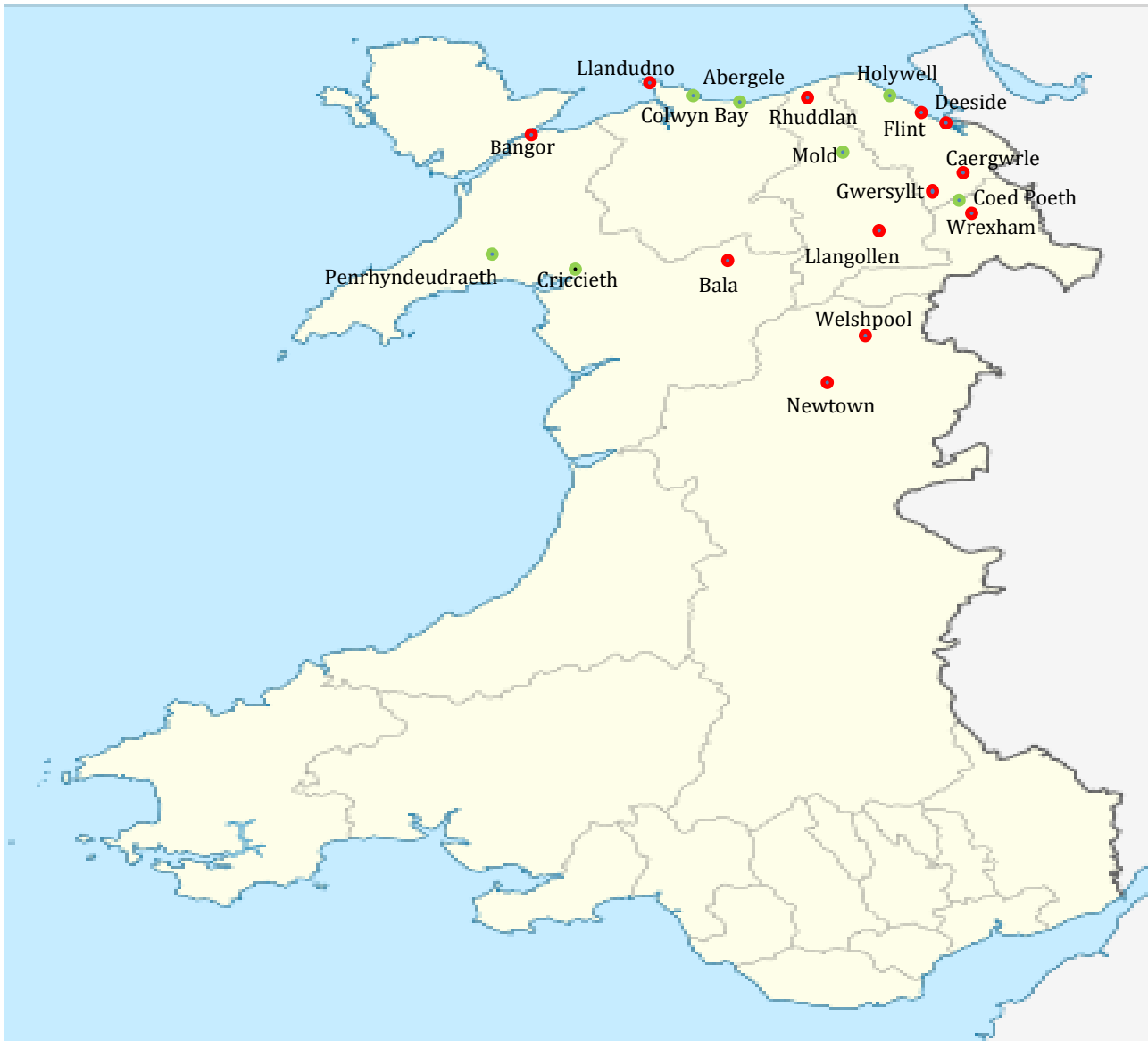
In preparing fieldwork I initially attended most of the conservative evangelical churches in the North Wales area that are detailed in Figure 13, each for one week. This enabled initial contact to be made with members and pastors, sizes of congregations to be assessed, and the feasibility of them being selected for placements evaluated. After attending churches that could take part, taking into account travel restrictions knowing that attending churches more than once a week over a

---

<sup>32</sup>As such, the study of homiletics is not a central theme in this thesis.

protracted period of time would incur financial and temporal demands, a list of possible candidates was made. Due to relatively small congregational sizes, and the number of interviews required, in addition to the desire to form a representative sample which would allow triangulation to take place, it was decided that three churches would be chosen in addition to the pilot study church, giving a total of four. Each of these four churches would be attended for three months each. AECW churches and other evangelical churches in North Wales can be seen on Figure 13.

FIGURE 13: LOCATION OF AECW AND OTHER CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL CHURCHES IN NORTH WALES



Source: Compiled with data from AECW website for member churches (shown in red). Points in green represent churches with similar doctrines and practices that are not part of the AECW. The list does not intend to be exhaustive, with for instance not including Welsh language churches. A number of churches join the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) which is doctrinally very similar to the AECW. More modern evangelical churches often join other organisations such as the Evangelical Alliance Wales (EAW) and are not included on this map. Neither are those with more Pentecostal or Charismatic beliefs.

For my project, the role of gatekeepers has been important and these have been church pastors or elders who have the ability to facilitate or block this kind of research (Table 6). This led to

my decision to conduct the pilot study in a church I had attended for a number of years. Already having good relationships led to support and positive endorsement of what I was planning to do and some members agreed to give interviews for the pilot study. My fieldwork then involved attending another 3 churches that are members of the AECW. It was not deemed necessary to approach the EMW with my research plans, as individual churches are autonomous. The pastor of the pilot study church became a sponsor when contacting pastors of the three churches, each of which became a gatekeeper for their church. I therefore had pastoral reference and recommendation when approaching churches, as a fellow Christian, an 'insider', which was very important.

TABLE 6: THE ROLE OF GATEKEEPERS

Someone with authority to police the boundaries of a group
Often first point of call for potential researchers
Power to grant or withhold permission and there may be several with importance for one research project
Concerned with the picture the researcher will paint of their organisation
They will have expectancy about the researcher's <i>identity</i> and <i>intentions</i>
Can exercise surveillance during fieldwork, shepherding and blocking certain lines of enquiry

Sources: Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), Taylor (eds.) (2002), Fetterman (2010).

TABLE 7: THE ROLE OF SPONSORS

People or organisations whom it may be beneficial for the researcher to get on side
May show general <i>support</i> for a project
Can be related to gatekeepers, but also be distinct
Can add authenticity to a researcher and project and therefore positively influence gatekeepers
Potential sponsors can also have a detrimental impact on a research project if actively engaging with a view that they are opposed rather than in support of the research

Sources: Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), Taylor (eds.) (2002), Fetterman (2010).

All churches were asked to take part via a formal letter of introduction to their pastor outlining the project, in addition to being provided with sample Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms, copies of which were later given to interview candidates.<sup>33</sup> Access was gained relatively easily to most churches that were asked to take part, whilst with one church there was a delay as further clarification was sought about the data I would be collecting.

---

### 3:4 BEING A RESPECTFUL CULTURAL ETHNOGRAPHER

---

---

#### 3:4:1 PREPAREDNESS FOR THE FIELD

---

As with all research of this type the researcher has a responsibility for cultural sensitivity in the field. Part of this is in having an acceptable level of understanding and knowledge of the group being studied prior to engagement with them. Having lived most of my life in Wales I have a knowledge of its history, culture and natural landscape. This was also important for my reputation as a cultural ethnographer. Although I had a high level of knowledge of the evangelical faith in general, previously having undertaken a one-to-one Bible study with an evangelical minister over the course of 18 months with weekly meetings, I had far less knowledge of Welsh evangelical Christianity in particular. To this end, once the literature review was completed, I researched and wrote a 10,000 word document about Welsh Christian history and the origins and beliefs integral to the EMW. This gave me more confidence when entering the field, enabled me to engage in conversations about Welsh revivals or famous preachers such as Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and therefore integrate in a deeper and more meaningful way. The researcher's responsibility to enter the field well prepared also extends to relevant academic training. In addition to having successfully completed an MA which included independent dissertation research on an environmental topic, an extra separate post-graduate module in research methods concentrating upon ethnography was successfully completed.

Having attended the EMW's annual Aberystwyth conference, during the period of fieldwork, also acted to reinforce my position, since many church members had attended at some point and this acted as a catalyst for conversation. Type of clothes was not such an issue as many younger people dress more casually in the churches I studied. However, I felt it helped dressing more formally. Knowing more Welsh language may have helped in one church, but again this was not an

---

<sup>33</sup> Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms have been included as Appendices 2 and 3.

important issue as all church services attended were conducted in the English language and all those who participated in interviews spoke fluent English.

---

### 3:4:2 ACCEPTING OTHERS' OPINIONS

---

Maintaining good field relations is imperative to the successful completion of an ethnographic project and was a continuous process which was reinforced as time went by. This covered a number of areas for my research and in documenting them here it may provide useful information for other researchers engaging with faith communities. One aspect of this was not engaging in theological debate that might exclude me from the group. This was especially important for the group I studied who hold narrow views of what the Christian gospel is and therefore what a Christian is. It was therefore important to hear others' opinions but not challenge them too much with any counter beliefs that may make them think less of the researcher or project, or be seen as confrontational, as avoiding possible conflict is a good standard practice in ethnographic research (Neuman, 2011, p.440).

It is important to be prepared for contrasting responses from congregants; to appreciate support but also not be too downcast by negative comments. For instance on hearing of my project one member asked for a list of the churches I would attend, with dates, so she could pray for me. She thought the topic was very worthwhile and gave me a greeting card with a financial gift toward a book I might need. She also talked highly of me and of what I was doing and I was very appreciative of her positive attitude. Yet another member took an immediate dislike to my project, putting forward the view that it was not important. It is obvious that talking about me and the project with others in the church could be detrimental.

---

### 3:4:3 CONFORMING TO ACCEPTABLE DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES

---

Conservative evangelicals adhere to very strict and narrow theological interpretations. It is therefore important in maintaining insider status and good field relations, not to show allegiance to beliefs that would lead to church pastors and members questioning my authenticity as a Christian: such as universal salvation, ecumenism, biological evolution, social gospel and issues of homosexuality and women leadership in the church. In addition, to appear against modern charismatic worship styles, such as band music, clapping or raising hands, and the use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in

tongues and prophecy, as all such things are excluded from conservative evangelical practice. Again this points to the need to have detailed knowledge of the community being studied before engaging in fieldwork. It would have been extremely difficult for an outsider with no knowledge of the group's beliefs and positions, to come in and be accepted to conduct the research.

---

### 3:4:4 USING ACCEPTABLE TERMINOLOGY

---

Although my project is about evangelical Christians and the environment, it became clear early on that the word 'environment' was not seen in a positive light by some people within my target group, probably due to connotations with the environmental movement. This may be one reason why church based environmental concern is called 'creation care' rather than environmental stewardship.<sup>34</sup> The 'creation care' movement gains more momentum as the word 'creation' is seen as having more biblical roots whereas environment is seen as secular. The word creation is linked closely to creationism, which conservative evangelicals strongly believe in. I was therefore careful to introduce my topic on Participant Information Sheets as about Evangelicalism and Creation. This could be included in what has been described as good research practice in being truthful with research plans but not overly precise and retaining an element of vagueness (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p.33). Other terminology that is frequently used by conservative evangelicals are words such as 'saved' and 'born again' which I had to take into account with interview questions.

---

### 3:5 DATA COLLECTION

---

---

#### 3:5:1 EXPERIENCES WITHIN CHURCHES

---

It is not uncommon for field researchers to enter the field with some apprehension and feelings of awkwardness, at least until a level of rapport has been established with those in whose space the researcher has entered (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p.48-49). After the pilot study, access was easily gained to one of the selected churches in part helped by me already knowing a few members.<sup>35</sup> We

---

<sup>34</sup> This can be seen with such organisations as Care of Creation, a U.S. based evangelical Christian organisation whose stated goal is to mobilise the church to be more engaged with environmental stewardship. See Ed Brown (2008).

<sup>35</sup> In this section the real order churches were attended have been randomly mixed to help aid in anonymity.

were therefore welcomed and quickly integrated into the setting. I was invited to participate in prayer for the services and my wife was invited to give a Sunday school presentation. We were invited to several people's homes to conduct interviews, with hospitality often including a meal. Yet another selected church was very different; something that I had not foreseen. Again I had pastoral reference and sponsorship with the initial point of contact, the church's pastor, yet I did not previously know anyone in the church. A first response was that my request would be discussed by the church elders. After around two weeks with no response, I made a further contact, being given the reply that 'on the whole they were happy for me to conduct my research there'. On my third week I was asked to answer some questions before the congregation; to give a testimony that I was a Christian, and to explain what I was doing there. Again this was part of the access process and to ease any fears members may have had. Yet in telling a group of mostly Welsh evangelicals, that I am English, and that I was previously a Catholic, and that I had only attended evangelical churches for several years, may have increased a sense of suspicion that existed. This suspicion may also have increased due to me studying in a university theology and religious studies department.

University theology departments are not seen in high regard by conservative evangelicals as they are deemed too liberal. In fact the common experience of ethnographers being treated with suspicion in the field could be most accurately pinpointed for my own research in being thought I may be a liberal theologian and not a converted Christian. This problem has also been noted by other researchers involved with Christian communities such as James Bielo (2009) in the U.S. where tension also exists between 'the academy' (university system) and evangelicals who see the former as a breeding ground of liberalism, humanism and secularism (Bielo, 2009, p.40). Access to the remaining church was relatively smoothly achieved although the pastor seemed slow to respond when initial contact was made. Being more progressive than the other three churches,<sup>36</sup> there may have been a feeling that a project covering creationism may be concentrating upon an issue that caused division and fractures within evangelicalism in the past and therefore undesirable, as was expressed in a small number of interviews.

Each church placement typically involved travelling to Sunday services two times per day (both morning and evening) for twelve weeks. For this purpose during fieldwork 2,554 miles were travelled in the process of attending church placements and in their selection, plus 495 miles to attend other relevant presentations. In addition 756 miles were travelled to conduct interviews. For

---

<sup>36</sup> Such as using more modern hymns, a hymn projector, and the NIV as their church Bible.



the whole project a total of 3,805 miles were travelled by car.<sup>37</sup> However, this does not include such things as travel to university for training, supervision and to use library resources. Church placements involved attending the service as a participant observer during which time the hymns used were noted and written notes were made of the sermons presented, as it was deemed too obtrusive to audio record them and this may have made access more problematic. Notes were also made on other activities such as the topic of prayers and any special presentations given by visitors for instance. After services effort was made to build relationships by talking to church members over refreshments. Church services commonly began at 10.30 a.m. for the morning service and 6 or 6.30 p.m. for the evening service. Messages would commonly last around 30 minutes or so and with the singing of hymns, Scripture readings and prayer, the whole service would last over an hour, or even longer if the Lord's Table was observed. For the whole church service and refreshments and fellowship it was not uncommon for a period of two hours to be taken up.

Observation of the inside of churches such as literature and book stands also took place and as much data as possible was collected from these multiple sources during placements. Occasionally Wednesday evening Bible studies and prayer meetings were also attended which provided additional material.<sup>38</sup> I achieved a high level of integration as a participant at churches. This was important in that my authenticity as both a Christian and a researcher be validated and I had to build up trust in this respect. Each of the churches also had its own website, the observation of which became another data source such as stating the churches doctrinal beliefs, what its mission was in society and what church activities would take place.

Each Monday, the following day after services, sermon notes were typed up whilst the presentation was still fresh in my mind. There were 128 sermons given by 20 different ministers over the course of the fieldwork. The hymns used were also sourced from the appropriate hymnals and typed up along with any other relevant data. During fieldwork a total of 260 different hymns were sung, with some being more common and used multiple times. Over the four churches a total of four

---

<sup>37</sup> Due to this project having a creation and environment theme, and noting that clocking up a substantial amount of mileage may be deemed to have a negative environmental impact, I thought it appropriate to have a number of trees planted to offset this, via two charitable organisations working in Africa.

<sup>38</sup> Due to the large amount of data collected from multiple sources, which informed this ethnography, it was not deemed feasible to additionally attend all weekly Bible studies over the course of a year. However, having detailed personal experience of attending conservative evangelical Bible studies, I have confidence that using them as a main data source for this project would not have led to any major changes in results. This is partly due to the way conservative evangelical Bible studies are conducted, largely in the format of a 'sermon' type Bible message given by the pastor, similar to Sundays, followed by prayer requests and prayer, with limited opportunity for group discussion.

different hymn books were used, with only two churches using the same book (although different versions), with one church using two hymn books, whilst another used a shorter pamphlet style book in combination with lyrics projected on a screen and printed out.<sup>39</sup> A diary was also kept detailing relevant material such as my own thoughts and feelings as to how fieldwork was going. This became important in reflecting upon any problems encountered and enabled monitoring of things such as personal feelings that could be discussed at supervisory meetings. With regards to Bible translations, all four churches had moved away from the King James Version (KJV). One had adopted the New King James Version (NKJV) as the choice of church Bible, another church had more recently moved away from the KJV to the English Standard Version (ESV), whilst two churches had moved away from the KJV version at some point further in their past and had now adopted the New International Version (NIV) as their church Bible.

---

### 3:5:2 CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

---

During the planning of this research project it was deemed that interviews rather than focus groups provided the best possible technique to gain the required data. One reason was that the literature review uncovered the fact that interviews had been neglected within the few published qualitative studies that have addressed Christian groups and the environment; with other methods such as discourse analysis (Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs, 2009), auto-ethnography (Haluza-Delay, 2008) and focus groups having been used (Wilkinson, 2010b; DeLashmutt, 2011). I considered for my project that focus groups on a topic such as evangelicalism and the environment could perhaps provide less sincere data than a personal interview. For instance it was believed a lack of confidentiality within the group may lead to things such as less diversity with opinions, less openness to express personal experiences and the danger of one or two stronger personalities dominating group discussions. Research as early as 1957 concluded that the privacy of the interview situation led to respondents divulging information they would not do in open interactions (Trow, 1957, pp.332-38, cited in Seale, 2000, pp.55-56). No doubt this argument can be extended to comparing interviews to focus group situations for similar reasons of confidentiality. Personal and private

---

<sup>39</sup>One church used Cook *et al. Christian Hymns* (2004) which contains many new hymns and the removal of some older hymns, compared to the first edition. Another church used *Psalms and Hymns of Reformed Worship*, The Wakeman Trust (1994), whilst another used Edwards *et al. Praise! Psalms, Hymns and Songs for Christian Worship* (2000) in conjunction with the first edition of Cook and Harrison, *Christian Hymns* (1977). The fourth church mainly projected hymns on to a screen in conjunction with printed sheets and also used Fudge, Horrobin and Leavers, *Mission Praise* (1983).

interviews were deemed a more secure way of collecting pure primary data: creating a space where conversation allows people to share their experiences and understanding (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.11), areas that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people's experiences from their own standpoint and their attitudes (Perakyla and Ruusuvuori, 2011, p.529). The data that can emerge from such close engagement between interviewer and interviewee has led to interviews being termed 'the gold standard of qualitative research' (Mason, 2003, p.225).

Central to quantitative studies is the need to attain samples that are statistically representative of the studied populace, yet for qualitative studies this is not the case and more important is a desire to incorporate diversity and to focus upon spaces that can show meaningful differences via a purposive strategy (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.29). During the last few weeks of each church placement I approached possible interviewee candidates and gave out Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms. By this time my previous interaction with these congregants meant they were already aware of the project's objectives and topical focus. I had already established a relationship with them to a certain extent and this was another benefit of attending the churches in person over a protracted period of time. For instance I knew they saw themselves as 'conservative evangelicals', that they believed they had been 'born again' and 'saved', and that central to their Christian faith was a desire to evangelise, to 'share Jesus' with other people.

The vast majority of people who were asked to take part responded positively which led to a successful interview being undertaken. Only a small number refused, often due to time pressures or being apprehensive they may not know the answers, although the majority of these were women. In one church an elder gave me a list of church members he thought I should interview and although this was probably a genuine act of kindness in wanting to help, I still went on to choose my own candidates as to follow his instruction could have been seen as 'shepherding' as he may have used value judgements in who he chose.

Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality are adequately addressed can also lead to richer data sets being collected as those taking part will feel more at ease. It was decided that although the EMW would be named in the thesis, as the umbrella organisation of the churches being studied, individual names of churches or participants would not be mentioned. This would enable readers and audiences to understand the doctrinal positions of those taking part whilst ensuring their anonymity. Using a broader number of churches, four, rather than just one, also lessened the chances individual churches or participants could be identified from the thesis data. Churches in written reports and presentations would only be named as 'Church 1', 'Church 2', 'Church 3' and

'Church 4'. Individual participants were given a pseudonym whilst writing results, although their real age was included with any direct quotations.

The research complied with the Data Protection Act 1998. Interviews were recorded then transferred to my personal computer where they were stored in files under a secure password. NVivo 10 software was used to collate information, again under a password only known by myself. Printed documents relating to the project were stored in a secure locked storage cabinet in my personal study. Control and custodianship of the data will remain my responsibility. These measures again complied with relevant ethical guidelines. Participants were also provided with contact details of the Dean of Humanities at the University of Chester in the event they had any complaints or issues they wished to report.

Potential risks to myself were seen as minimal. One possible scenario may be in being exposed to doctrinal positions, such as to do with eschatological interpretations, that I may not share. However, this was seen as something that could be managed within the context of the project. Another was in the area of whether conducting the research amongst people, initially at least, some of whom I had previously known, could possibly affect personal relationships. Again it was deemed that such risks were manageable, in relation to the importance of the project and possible benefits that could ensue.

It was not envisaged there would be any direct or immediate negative effects on participants. Many members of congregations I studied are in the 60-80 years old age bracket. To have a representative sample it was therefore necessary to interview such people. However, those very frail or of poor health were selected only when deemed appropriate to do so. It was also stated in the Participant Information Sheets that interviewees could suspend the interview permanently or temporarily if they felt unwell, tired, uncomfortable or changed their mind. They were also informed of this before the interview commenced. However, this did not happen during any interviews.

There were a number of potential benefits foreseen for those taking part in the study. Evangelical Christians enjoy talking about their beliefs, being a marginalised group within society. They may see taking part as an opportunity to teach others about their faith. Questions may also prompt them to think about issues raised during the interview. This could possibly result in some participants thinking about things differently than before: such as a Christian's relationship to nature. Some may also feel a sense of importance from personally helping with a doctoral study. Respondents may also benefit from being informed of the results of the study, either individually or

at a future presentation that I would give, that they would be invited to attend. It is intended that results will be presented at all of the churches that took part in the study, again in line with good ethical practice.

Interviewees were given the choice of conducting the interview either at their home, my home or a neutral location. Some interviews were conducted on church premises upon the interviewees' request, though never on a Sunday, but during a mid-week church coffee drop-in for instance, in a private room free from distractions. As the research was a form of 'work' for me, it was important not to offend anyone's beliefs by attempting to conduct interviews on Sundays. Physical settings provided a quiet and comfortable place, which is recommended, along with giving the participant a level of choice as to upon whose 'territory' they wished the encounter to take place (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.43).

It is not uncommon in ethnographic research, as those taking part give their time willingly, that a level of reciprocity exists, and that in this respect they gain something in return (Fetterman, 2010, p.147) or that the researcher 'performs small favours' (Neuman, 2011, p.440). For instance, one interviewee asked if I could take him and his wife to a hospital appointment and then conduct the interview when I returned them home. More than half a day was taken up to secure this one interview. On another occasion when asking an elderly couple if they would take part, the response was 'yes' but then I was asked to repair a broken fence and gate at their house before the interviews would commence. These instances were rare and involved 'going the extra mile' to get the interview, but could also be seen as an expression of kindness and bonding with church members, therefore reinforcing my position as an 'insider'.

Interviews commonly lasted less than an hour and were audio recorded with the respondents' permission. The shortest interview lasted 35 minutes 56 seconds and the longest lasted 91 minutes and 8 seconds. For the forty interviews a total of 2,295 minutes and 48 seconds of recording was undertaken with an average of 57 minutes 39 seconds per interview. My criteria for selection was only that the person regularly attended the churches I had placements at and saw themselves as a conservative evangelical Christian, such as desiring to be known as 'born again' Christians or could give testimony to having been 'saved'. In some churches people offered to participate as they wanted to be helpful. Attempts were made to get a variety with regards to demographic variables such as age, gender, work experiences and cultural background. This is due to it generally not being desirous in qualitative research to gain a statistically representative sample of the population being studied, but rather illuminating relevant categories (Neuman, 2011, p.241). One interview was lost due to a technical failure and another was not used as it was conducted early

in the pilot study with someone who only attended briefly and was from another church of different theological background. One interview was conducted with a former member of one of the churches I studied who happened to be home during my placement, and due to his work experience with evangelism and agriculture I took the opportunity to interview him, though after supervisory deliberation, it was deemed that although his work experience was highly relevant he did not strictly fulfil selection criteria. Although 40 interviews were conducted, the main analysis presented in Chapters 5-7 is made up from 37 interviews. Audio-recordings were carefully transcribed word by word, a process which often took several hours per interview. Data was recorded on NVivo 10 Software to aid as a safe storage method and more importantly to help with the complexity of coding and analysis that would ensue: computer software greatly aids the ease of storage, access and manoeuvrability with large amounts of data (Richards, 2010, p.63).

Designing an interview template and conducting interviews can be seen as attempting to ascertain where exactly to manoeuvre between too wide a focus, which may deliver a broad scattering of unrelated snapshots and too narrow, which can create an uninteresting study which has blocked out useful data (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.26). Conducting the pilot study in conjunction with regular peer review enabled the organic nature of qualitative research and the fine tuning of techniques to be reviewed and developed before going into the field proper. The interview questionnaire in particular was regularly revised. Initial thinking had been to attempt to test the multiple results of the literature review via a detailed questionnaire. Yet it was deemed that a more open approach was needed, to gain pure primary data, rather than being preloaded with what I thought were the areas to cover. This was therefore stripped back to a small number of more open questions or themes (see Appendix 4). This problem is not uncommon and is mentioned in the literature.<sup>40</sup> The openness and fluidity within the interview encounter leads to 'emerging ideas' rather than 'patterns from fixed questions' (Richards, 2010, p.43) leading to the development of an interviewer skill whereby questions and prompts open up where the interviewee is coming from rather than interrupting trains of thought (May, 2003, p.29). This can encourage the interviewee to expose their narrative or story, of both themselves and their place within their surroundings, or personal narratives and social and institutional narratives (Lawler, 2003, p.251). The present interview template was used for the vast majority of interviews, though was modified during the first half of those conducted for the pilot study. It should also be noted that due to the trains of thought being expressed during interviews, it was common to ask a number of different questions to

---

<sup>40</sup> See Cameron *et al.* 2005, p.31, King and Horrocks, 2010, pp.2, 36.

different participants, such as with probing for instance,<sup>41</sup> and on specific topics that the interviewee brought up. The richness of data coming from this interview format indicates the success of this interviewing template. Many things came up that I had not previously been aware of and may have been missed with a more rigid questioning style.

I generally only conducted one interview per day as this gave a chance to interact more deeply with those taking part. I found it helpful to include a final question in each interview aimed at catching anything I might have missed, such as 'Is there anything else you would like to add that you think might be useful to my research, or is there anything you would like to ask?' This is seen as good practice (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.56) and proved useful in this research as most respondents added something with this prompt. I always used two voice recorders at a time in case there was a technical issue with one of them.

Regular peer review led to a form of 'independent validation' to the data being collected. Supervisory expertise enabled me to monitor possible biases or distortions which can be caused by the researcher's own values, history and agenda. This allowed the processing, valuation and analysis of data to be as true as possible to the actual data sets that were collected. To this end whole transcribed interview texts were read by a supervisor with comments noted that were then discussed at face-to-face meetings. To have analysed all of the hymns, sermons, interviews, observations and other materials collected during the period of fieldwork, would have amounted to something of an impossible task, or something which has been described as 'death by data asphyxiation' (Pettigrew, 1988, cited by Eisenhardt, 2002, p.17). As data collection proceeded, it became evident that although reference to sermons and some hymns could provide valid background information, interviews provided a clearer means of addressing the research questions.

Coding of data took place over several months and was done with the aid of NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software. Nodes and sub-nodes were created enabling a thematic analysis to take place. Frequency of some nodes and rarity of others pointed to both more concrete themes and more complex diversity. Before coding, each interview was read several times. This allowed a process of immersion to take place, allowing the more obvious themes yet subtle nuances to emerge from the data.

---

<sup>41</sup> King and Horrocks (2010, p.53) present three styles of probing necessary: elaboration, clarification and completion; all were used when conducting interviews for this study.

---

### 3:5:3 DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR INTERVIEWEES

---

Interviews first collected background information about respondents; such as gender, age, nationality and educational qualifications. This data is presented in Table 8 below. In addition, information on church background and occupation was also collected and is discussed below. The presentation of this data's main purpose is to show links between conservative evangelicalism and creation as a whole, yet in utilising four different churches, the authenticity of results can be verified with triangulation. As Figure 1 showed in the literature review, previous studies of the population at large report a number of demographic variables that lead to greater concern for the environment and a greater understanding of environmental issues and these results can also be compared with those for this study, in Chapter 8.



TABLE 8: INTERVIEWEE CHARACTERISTICS

Interviewee Characteristics	Number of Interviews
Male	13
Female	27
White	36
Black	2
Asian	2
British (Welsh, English, Scottish)	33
European (Hungarian)	1
African (Nigerian)	2
Asian (Filipino)	2
North American (U.S.)	2
18-29	3
30-39	6
40-49	5
50-59	3
60-69	8
70-79	12
80-89	3
High School	6
Diploma	3
Graduate Degree	7
Post-Graduate	10
Work Related	9
None	5

Original intentions would have been to get a fairly even balance of male and female respondents. However, this would have been difficult to achieve due to conservative evangelical churches having highly defined gender roles. Not only are women not permitted to preach or teach the whole congregation, but they are also limited in other respects in roles they can take during church services. For instance only one of the four churches allowed women to publicly read Scriptures (CH1), whilst only one other allowed women to be involved with corporate prayer during Sunday services (CH4). Women's roles mainly concentrated on teaching Sunday school to children and

helping out with refreshments after services. As an ethnographer, it was therefore important to respect the communities being studied and this meant it often was deemed more appropriate to ask male congregants to take part. In some instances, due to the cultural background of respondents, it may have been seen as disrespectful if the wife of a husband was approached to take part in an interview, rather than the husband. During the course of the ethnography and the recruitment of interviewees, a total of seven congregants declined to be interviewed and five of these were women. I believe this may have been in part due to the gender role differences outlined above. Despite this difficulty, overall a ratio of interviewees of roughly two-thirds male to one-third female was achieved.

Respondents are represented from each of the seven age categories (18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79 and 80-89). However, a common feature of the target group is that generally more elderly people make up the majority of congregations, especially those above the age of 65. Respondents who took part in interviews aged 70 to 79 are more numerous than any other category and this is in line with general congregational trends. A total of half of interviewees were from the ages of 60 to 79.

Respondents were asked what their nationality was, with many choosing U.K. or British as their preferred answer (rather than Welsh or English for instance): 42% of respondents identified themselves in this way, 24% chose Wales as their country of origin, 16% England, 2% Scotland, 5% U.S., 5% Nigeria, 2% Philippines and 2% Hungary. In total, some 80% of interview respondents are therefore of British origin (self-identification as British plus Welsh, English and Scottish). The remaining 20% identified their background as from Africa, North America, Asia and Europe. Also noted was the length of time the respondents had lived in Wales, and this ranged from a minimum of one year and two months, to a maximum of 72 years. For all 37 respondents the average time they had lived in Wales was 26 years and six months.

Respondents were asked how they would describe their own church background. Most answered in terms of a specific denomination they had grown up in or attended before choosing to leave and attend an evangelical church. A small number answered more generally with 'mixed', 'reformed' or 'evangelical'. Some had left a church or denomination due to changes they had witnessed that they did not like such as the introduction of modern worship styles with 'bands' or the practise of spiritual gifts or general movements toward liberalism. Others changed churches as part of their conversion experience, or because their previous church had closed down, whilst some attended their current evangelical church due to its proximity to where they lived. The variety shows that most respondents had not been life-long attenders of their current church or a very similar one.

The following list notes the number of interviewees and the church background they chose to mention: six Pentecostal; six Baptist; four mixed; three Anglican, three reformed and three evangelical; two each for Calvinistic Methodist, Church of Christ, Methodist and Brethren; one each for Salvation Army, Church of the Nazarene, Apostolic Church and Elim.

Levels of education were divided into the following categories: none, high school, work related training, diploma, graduate degree and post-graduate degree. Most common was a post-graduate qualification, followed by specific work related training, then a graduate degree, high school, none, or diploma. There were therefore a high percentage of professionals who took part in interviews who had a university background, as well as those in professions that had required specific work related training.

The occupation of respondents was asked including previous work for retired persons. Most popular was teaching (eight), followed by nursing or care work (six). Next came manual work which included carpentry, caretaker, warehouse work, post man, gardener and merchant navy, with six people. Fourth most popular was church minister (four), followed by engineering (three), then medical doctor (two). Remaining professions were placed in the 'others' section, totalling eight interviewees, and included fostering, secretarial, banking, missionary, student, civil service, salesman, and special needs manager.

In comparing the demographical information presented above, for the four different churches, the following trends were evident. Churches 1, 3 and 4 had slightly greater numbers of male respondents than female with church 2 having a far higher number of men than women taking part. With regards to ages, Churches 1 and 3 had the most elderly congregants taking part from the 70 plus categories. Whilst Church 4 had the most interviewees taking part from the 60-79 categories, with church 2 having the highest number of younger congregants (18-29) and middle aged (40-49). With educational backgrounds, Church 2 had the most post-graduates and professionals whilst Church 1 showed a mix of respondents from various different categories. Church 3 had the most 'graduate' or 'work specific' qualifications whilst Church 4 appeared to have the least educational attainment with the highest number of respondents either having no qualifications or just high school. With occupations Church 4 had the most manual workers and those involved in nursing and care work. Church 3 had members spread across all of the occupational categories. Church 2 had more professionals such as teachers and doctors as would align with educational backgrounds. Church 1 had a number of interviewees being teachers and involved in various jobs in the category of 'other'.

### 3:6 CONCLUSION

---

This chapter, starting with the research problem to be addressed, has discussed how the qualitative methodology of ethnography provides a means of answering the desired research questions. After covering methodological considerations, the benefits of the specific research methods of participant observation and interviewing were assessed and chosen. A background has been provided to aspects of grounded theory which this project utilises. The multifaceted nature of ethical considerations within a qualitative project have also been scrutinised as well as more specific aspects of issues raised during fieldwork with a detailed overview of gaining access for participant observation and conducting interviews. In addition, aspects of what mark the quality of qualitative research have been discussed. I have also mapped out techniques of how data was analysed and presented demographical characteristics of those who took part in interviews as well as provided a historical overview of the development of the churches which they were selected from. The rigorous engagement with sources through a logical progression from the starting point of research questions, through methodological underpinnings and research method techniques, through to personal experiences of data collection, provides a solid foundation upon which to choose a method of theological reflection to aid with the analysis of data and conceptualisation of results, which has resulted from the fieldwork outlined above.

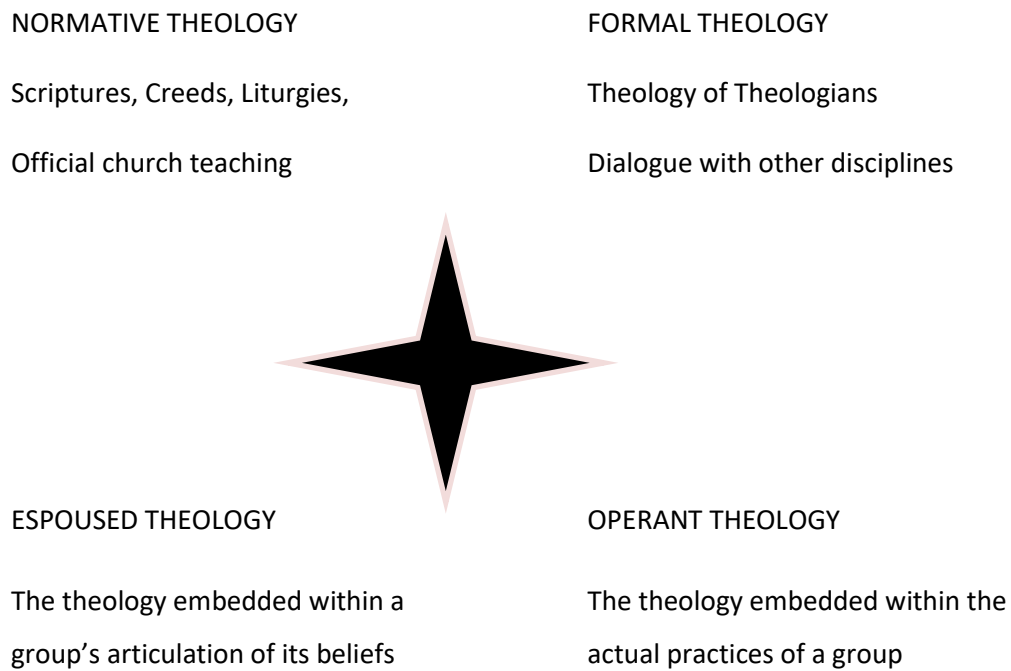
### 4:1 THE FOUR VOICES OF THEOLOGY

---

Cameron *et al.* (2010), in their publication *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology*, developed a valuable guide for researchers in the field of practical theology. Outlining the difficulties in how contemporary Christian people integrate theology and practice, especially against a backdrop of an increasingly non-theological and secular post-modern culture that has drifted from the historical norm of the convergence of a Christian world-view and traditional societal values, the authors seek to re-engage Christian faith communities in their theological engagement with contemporary culture (Cameron *et al.* 2010, pp.9-13, 18). This, combined with the difficulties involved in understanding and articulating how people practise theology and the interrelationships between experience and tradition, led to a desire to develop methods to improve understanding of these complexities. However, although this endeavour itself is nothing new and has for a long time been central to theological reflection, it is precisely how this can be attempted which is illustrated more clearly by Cameron *et al.* (2010).

Promoting the use of Theological Action Research (TAR), a combination of practical theology and action research, has involved creating a detailed methodological framework intended for use by other research projects and which can transform practice through theological insight (Cameron *et al.* 2010, p.17). Part of this has involved the authors detailing an insightful theory for how 'theological reflection' can take place in faith communities, using 'four voices': normative theology, formal theology, espoused theology and operant theology.

FIGURE 14: THE FOUR VOICES OF THEOLOGY



Source: Cameron *et al.* (2010, p.54).

In Figure 14 it can be seen that theology has a number of important facets that function in relation to one another. Cameron *et al.* describe these as 'a dynamic of distinct, but interrelated and overlapping voices' that make the complexity manageable (2010, p.53). The interrelationships can be understood in terms of hearing one voice amongst an echo from the other three (Cameron *et al.* 2010, p.54) and therefore the uncovering of previously hidden theological voices (Cameron *et al.* 2010, p.152).

#### 4:2 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION IN CONTEXT

---

Although *Talking about God in Practice* has been described as 'a welcome addition to the toolkit for theological reflection' (Wood, 2011, p.28), which 'offers something fresh and fruitful in this emerging field of study' (Bryan, 2012, p.2), it is still rooted in a rich tradition of theological reflection and practical theology. For instance, both the historical and contemporary terrain of how Christian practitioners have 'reflected theologically' about their faith has been systematically mapped by Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Frances Ward (2005). Impressive in its scope, their *Theological Reflection: Methods* uses a form of 'ideal types' to explicate several ways in which the 'living out' of

the Christian faith has been articulated over the centuries. In this way, it is argued that personal theological reflection is not a new idea but is as old as the Christian faith itself (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p.1).

In *Theological Reflection* Judith Thompson (2008, p.114) notes how theological practitioners need to find a model to aid in reflection that best suits their own approach to research and to further modify this in line with their specific context. Although the complete methodological framework of theological action research from Cameron *et al.* (2010) was not deemed suitable for my research, I immediately saw how the 'four voices of theological reflection' could be highly useful as an analytical template or theoretical tool to help conceptualise and understand the themes emerging from my data. As a researcher of faith communities the four voices model offered something rigorous enough to assist scholarly analysis and yet flexible enough to allow its transference to and modification in a different context. This also responds to a request from the authors to other researchers to 'try them out and develop them further' (Cameron *et al.* 2010, pp.2, 61) as they represent a complex locus for theological understanding, from which new insights are still to be gleaned (Cameron *et al.* 2010, pp.147, 150). It also makes research participants more inclusive, giving them a voice, rather than just treating them as a subject of analysis. In addition, it offers a framework 'committed to the truthfulness of Christian wisdom' whilst engaging Christian practice and experience (Bryan, 2012, p.1). For my own project it therefore has the potential to offer hope (such as maintaining Christian standards) rather than instigating fear (by being seen as a threat to Christian orthodoxy). For instance it has previously been used in the contexts of wanting to draw more authentically upon normative sources to counter secularisation (Cameron, 2012) and 'the ability to defend Christian actions and emphasise Christian distinctiveness to others' (Shepherd, 2012, p.137). The four voices theory therefore engages in a respectful way with faith communities. In addition it offers the benefit of 'bridge-building': at one level this can be seen in relating theory and practice or tradition and experience (Bryan, 2012, p.1; Steen, 2010, p.108), which for my own project offers the potential for increasing understanding of where these two spheres meet with the theme of the environment. It also has the benefit of addressing real life issues with participant/researcher interaction (Cronshaw, 2014, p.167), again for my own project focusing upon a contemporary issue of great importance. The four voices theory has also been well received within theological discourse and been successfully used by academics in other denominational settings addressing various other topics, some of which includes using the four voices as an analytical template to varying degrees. Indeed, Read (2012, p.61) noted that: 'What is envisaged here (*Talking About God in Practice*) is intended for use in a group setting but could perhaps be adapted for someone reflecting on a particular situation on their own'. The different types of data collected

during my ethnography easily relate to the four different voices, which makes the theory all the more poignant in being able to differentiate relationships between data and to articulate results.

#### 4:3 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING: THE LIBERAL STARTING POINT

---

In the last section I introduced the work of Cameron *et al.* (2010) *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology*. This detailed the author's presentation of the 'four voices model of theological reflection', and I justified my reasons for choosing this as a model for conceptualising and aiding in analysing my own data. In this section I will discuss how the four voices model potentially fits into the specific context of conservative evangelicalism in North Wales. I will show the trend in how the model has been used within broader Christendom. Given the broad ecumenical make-up of the authors of *Talking About God in Practice* and the more liberal contexts in which it has been used to date, such as Cameron and Duce (2013), Christie (2013), Idestrom (2013), Dillen (2014), Pallant (2014) and Henwood (2015), I argue that a modification and refinement of the model is needed for the conservative evangelical context. So although starting with the work of Cameron *et al.* (2010) I will adapt this model of theological reflection so it can be utilised in the context of my own research. Particularly the non-hierarchical nature of the four voices and their interrelationships, as laid out by Cameron *et al.* (2010) is neither evidenced nor suitable in the conservative evangelical context. Read (2012, p.62) notes how the more liberal ecumenical context of the work presented in the book 'might imply there are no fixed points in theology and therefore might not be congenial to Christians from a more conservative theological background', although acknowledging that the four voice model keeps Scripture and tradition in view. Yet I would argue that there is the potential for very different dynamics in a modified 'four voices' template that can be used in a conservative evangelical context and this has the potential to offer further understanding of the theory itself or to start with the four voice theory of Cameron *et al.* (2010) but then to move beyond this. I am unaware of any previous use within a conservative evangelical constituency and using the four voices theory to aid the conceptualisation and analysis of my own data offers a real potential to yield more detailed insights into the theory itself. I therefore modify the 'four voices theory' and show how a more rigorous linear and hierarchical structure is needed in conservative evangelicalism, with normative theology at the top followed by espoused theology and then operant theology, with formal theology having a two way relationship with normative theology (Figure. 15). I will include a discussion of what each of the four voices means in terms of the data



collected during this ethnography and how dynamics between the four voices have the potential to operate differently in a conservative evangelical constituency.

The work of Zoe Bennet brings to the fore and grapples with tensions that exist between levels of authority placed within faith traditions on the one hand and personal experience on the other (2014) and shows that practical theology has become somewhat polarised along these lines (2013). Bennet (2013) notes the liberal-conservative tension in biblical interpretation as one between 'uncritical ecumenical mixing that accepts everything' on the one hand and those sticking to the 'verbal inerrancy of the Bible' on the other (p.2). Bennett (2013), wrestling with these polarisations, argues for a robust engagement with the Bible, but one that allows critical thinking and doubt, yet the tension is clearly articulated in that once a belief in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible is undermined, people positioned on the 'rock of God' can feel uncomfortably set adrift (Bennett, 2013, pp.11-12). Yet the alternative option for Bennet is the position of being 'under the text' or at least its interpreters, which she suggests can result in fear of transgression and manipulation or domination (Bennet, 2013, pp.27-28). Bennet argues for a middle path that acknowledges the importance of our own context that we bring to the Bible, to avoid polarisation between an authority given too exclusively to experience or Scripture and tradition (Bennet, 2013, pp.41-42).

Bennet (2014, pp.53-54), in articulating differences and tensions between religious tradition and personal experience, and more specifically whether the starting point or 'anchor' of theological reflection lies in divine revelation or human experience, talks about a far broader issue that I would suggest brings to the fore the differences that exist in employing the four voices model of Cameron *et al.* (2010) in a liberal or conservative evangelical context. Bennett (2014, p.54) sees this debate as not necessarily about whether to listen to people (liberal) or God (conservative), but about where to find God: through our human experience or divine revelation. I believe the four voices model of Cameron *et al.* (2010) would suggest both, yet in a conservative evangelical context this is problematic as accepted Christian orthodoxy is that God reveals himself to man through the Bible (Horden, 1968, pp.57-59). The question of where priority lies in generating theological knowledge, and the tensions that can exist between these when engaging in theological reflection, I believe points to the axis of liberal and conservative theological enquiry.<sup>42</sup> The former, whilst using and drawing upon Scripture, often engages in open criticism or even rejection of this, especially when

---

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed study of the liberal/evangelical divide, see Packer (1958) who gives a whole chapter to liberalism (pp.146-169) and another to evangelicalism (pp.24-40) and the differences between the two approaches to biblical study resonate as a theme throughout the book.

self-reflection and personal experience are not in harmony with Scripture. Here personal experience (operant theology) is seen as an additional source of theology which is also deemed to have a latent power (Cartledge, 2013; Dillen, 2014; Henwood, 2015).

#### 4:4 THE FOUR VOICES OF THEOLOGY: PREVIOUS USES IN ACADEMIA

---

The four voices theory has been seen as an important innovation developed through research into tangible expressions of Christian life (Wood, 2011, p.27), including Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism and the Salvation Army (Roach, 2011, p.125). It has therefore been designed with clear ecumenical undercurrents and a liberal starting point, yet this also points to the wide range of contexts in which the theory has relevance (Wood, 2011, p.27). Cameron *et al.* suggest (in the liberal context in which the theory has been developed) that normative and formal theologies may act critically in relation to the espoused and operant axis, yet theological practices help form and inform both formal and normative theologies. In this sense practices embody theologies that add to the complexity of manoeuvring between theological voices as both sides, normative/formal and operant/espoused, can influence and change the other (Cameron *et al.* 2010, p.56). This then involves individuals or groups renewing an operant level of theology in light of conversation with the other voices. Cameron *et al.* suggest that changes brought about through practise, i.e. operant theology leading to meaningful change of normative church tradition is a challenging possibility as operant theology offers new insights (2010, p.59). It is as yet little understood how exactly such processes may operate within a conservative evangelical group, which I believe would show marked resistance. Furthermore, I would argue that putting forth the view that operant theology can change normative theology has led to the four voices theory being used more liberally than Cameron *et al.* (2010) perhaps envisaged as it gives licence for an empowered operant voice which people can use to challenge biblical teaching.

A literature search has revealed that over forty other studies have now cited the work of Cameron *et al.* (2010) although many are only in relation to a brief reference rather than a detailed use of the theory. Bryant (2015, p.43) puts forward the view that the four voices do not necessarily have a hierarchy, in her article researching the relationship between her position as a non-faith scholar of religion researching hospital chaplaincy. Brower-Latz (2014, p.9), focusing upon Holiness Church engagement with social issues in an inner-city context, describes the four voices and how in interaction they can help the church increase self-understanding, and that in the author's own church context (Church of the Nazarene) particularly operant theology needs to be critically

examined. Leach (2015, p.29) in her article about the training of Methodist church leaders, focuses upon the relationship between biblical wisdom and human reason which articulates one of the relational tensions of the four voices, between normative and formal theology. Idestrom (2014, p.88) in defining the aims of Theological Action Research (TAR) in relation to problem-solving and how this might relate to his own reflections on a church conference in Sweden, shows how TAR aims are more egalitarian in that the superior researcher voice is rejected and the participants' voice of practice is taken seriously. Jordan (2012, p.67) in his article about the role of interim ministers in the Church of England, puts forward the view that operant theology can contain the two elements of an ordinary or uninstructed theology and an implicit theology, or that formed by church culture, habit, language or practice.

Studies that have used TAR and the 'Four Voices of Theological Reflection' in more explicit detail are few. Even those that do use the work of Cameron *et al.* (2010) in more detail, differ widely in the dynamics of how they do this. The work of Shepherd (2012) could be described as a full TAR project, looking at professional development within Christian ministry in the context of youth work in London. Pallant (2014) used the 'four voices model' as an aid to theological reflection in answering the question: 'What is The Salvation Army's theology as we serve a suffering humanity?' Whereas Schumacher (2013) combines the 'four voices' of Cameron *et al.* (2010) with the 'critical faithfulness model' of Swinton and Mowat (2006) for the purpose of data analysis in a qualitative project focused upon church engagement with creative arts in Scotland. This shows how 'the four voices' do not have to be used in the context of an explicit action research project, but also have value in being used as an analytical template which aids the conceptualisation of data. Even more strongly located in this domain is the work of Dillen (2014), who uses the four voices theory to reflect upon data and gain understanding whilst looking at the Catholic church, family life and marriage. In looking at previous studies that in some way use the four voices theory of Cameron *et al.* (2010), the strongest theme is that of 'liberation' or a renewed interest and voice given to operant theology.

Zoe Bennett's (2014) work bears testimony to a tension between operant and normative theology through her personal experience of feeling a dissonance between tradition and experience in relation to attitudes toward the ordination of women in the C of E. Here personal experience as a woman in the church, combined with an interest in feminist thought, led to a personal wish to see equality of roles within the church for men and women, a 'creative dialect', or in other words practice, leading to change in normative theology and traditional positions (2014, p.56). In such a scenario Bennet believes we must listen to both the 'text of the Bible' and the 'text of life' (Bennet, 2013, pp.20-25). However, on the issue of men and women's roles in ministry, my research revealed

how this would be resisted in a conservative evangelical context (CH2:SERM18). In addition, this view is more commonly expressed in formal theology, such as *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Piper and Grudem, 1991). More broadly in the field of practical theology, Cartledge (2013) drawing upon an analysis of formal theology in the field of theological practice, has shown how there has been a moving away from normative theology, resulting in a gulf between the two which results in formal theology often having a distinct character (p.278) apart from normative theology, rather than representing it. Cartledge claims liberal theologians working in the realm of practical theology use Scripture only in marginal ways and draw upon an ever widening array of non-theological sources (Cartledge, 2013, p.280) or more precisely work under 'the spell of social science' (p.281). Perhaps what Cartledge is pointing to is how practical theologians of the academy can be more rooted in non-theological disciplines where human reason flourishes, rather than biblical theology or a desire to implement biblical teachings (Linnemann, 1990, pp.107-111), resulting in their spiritual state being more closely linked to the former. Therefore, Cartledge claims that despite much practical theology being sophisticated and insightful, it is not biblical (p.280). This stands in stark contrast to a more conservative evangelical position, of 'trusting in God's Word and not relying on our own understanding' (CH2:SERM9), that 'the Word of God stands forever' (CH4:SERM1) and as the title of Noel Weeks' (1998) book suggests, a belief in '*The Sufficiency of Scripture*'.

Likewise, the highly interactive and less hierarchical nature of the 'four voices of theology' in a liberal context can be seen in several studies that have explicitly used the four voices theory. This liberal context is best exemplified by the perceived non-hierarchical nature of the four voices (Idestrom 2013, p.88; Bryant 2015, p.43; Duce 2013, pp.88-90) and even further in how the 'operant voice' can become the powerful leading voice, resulting in a 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' approach (Schumacher, 2013, p.19). For example, Pallant's (2014) work on Salvation Army social work programmes found that operant theology has moved so far from historic official denominational teaching that it is no longer being led by normative theology which is even seen as anachronistic (pp.2-3,7) and that what the church practises is helping people without any traditional normative drives such as evangelism. This operant led practise is even seen as having lost touch, not only with normative, but also formal and espoused theologies, with the end result being that operant theology lacks a clearly defined compass, yet on the other hand the claim is made that operant theology can be influenced directly by divine revelation or the working of the Holy Spirit (Pallant, 2014, p.7).

Christie (2013) likens 'espoused' theology to 'ordinary' theology. In an Anglican context Christie shows how theology from the pews, on major topics such as Christology, Soteriology, Atonement and pluralism did not match a traditional or normative position (pp.40-41). Yet Christie argues that rather than being an error, this unorthodox operant and espoused theology needs to be given an authentic voice of dialogue. In other words, in terms of the four voices of Cameron *et al.* (2010), in a liberal context it can be that operant and espoused theologies are not so much an articulation of normative and formal theology, but they can actually dilute, fail to propagate, or even change them (Christie, 2013, p.42). The end result being a watering down of normative theology that can result in Christian identity being defined as nothing more than attempting to do good (Christie, 2013, p.45).

Dillen (2014, p.227) also notes the discrepancy between official church teaching or formal theology and people's ideas and experiences, with the former being more conservative and the latter more challenging, yet it is argued that it is this operant theology that needs to be taken more seriously. In conclusion Dillen goes as far as to argue that it is not about lay people having to learn and obey the church's position but for theologians and church leaders to listen to lay experience (p.234). Such a view is even more strongly put by Henwood (2015), an Anglican priest wishing for significant changes in the official church position on the issue of homosexuality (p.93). Henwood's operant theology, of meeting with, knowing and desiring to give blessing to gay couples, led her to challenge the church's traditional and normative stance. In effect, her witnessing how contemporary operant theology can inform the meaning of marriage for some from their experience and practice rather than church teaching led to a desire for change (Henwood, p.96). Therefore operant theology in a liberal context is elevated to the extent that, if it is in a state of incongruence with normative theology, the argument is for a change in church teaching. Yet it should also be noted that in Henwood's case, her arguments are also strongly linked in detail to scriptural teachings and interpretations, combined with human experience and academic research.

Cox (2012, p.68) also points to how the seeming purpose of the four voices is to officiate or liberate the operant voice of a faith community, to give this voice recognition or a seat in a 'theological parliament', or even the possibility to engage in a 'theological shortcut' which bypasses normative theology (Dillen, 2012, p.227). Dillen even goes on to suggest that operant voices should gain normative recognition within church teaching (p.227) as the voices together can form a 'hybrid' (p.229) but admits that operant theologies are open to fanciful ideas and whims (p.228). In effect, the four voices model of Cameron *et al.*, when used in a liberal context, can in many ways lead to the direct challenge of Scripture or its traditional interpretation (Shepherd, 2012, pp.136-137).

It is not surprising that 'the theme of liberation' runs through much literature in the broader field of practical theology (Miller, 2015, p.286). Bennet explains this in terms of the Bible being removed from its pedestal and becoming an ingredient only, alongside experience, with the latter now gaining the power (through liberation theology) to critique the former (2013, p.28), which can result in 'playing with the text' and teasing out new meanings (Bennet, 2013, p.29). It can be seen with these examples of the four voices model being used and interpreted in a liberal and highly ecumenical context there is often a lower regard for normative theology in the face of a renewed interest in, and empowering from, operant theology.

The diamond shape of the four voices as laid out by Cameron *et al.* (2010), with a non-hierarchical and highly interactive structure, with each of the four voices interpenetrating and influencing the others (Cameron and Duce, 2013, p.xxx), is in sharp contrast to how the voices of theology may operate in a conservative evangelical context, which places Scripture in a highly elevated position (Prime, 2001; Cairns, 1998, pp.334-336). Although allowing reflection upon experience, conservative evangelicals rarely do this in a way that would critique Scripture or desire to change it, since formal theology would see it as a sin for preachers to not convey the true meaning of Scripture, just as a herald would be seen as a traitor in not conveying accurately the message of the king (Olyott, 2005, p.29). In the terms introduced by Bennett earlier, for conservative evangelicals, divine revelation as understood in Scripture is given precedence over human experience. This can be seen in the differences between formal theology in a liberal context (which often challenges Scripture by bringing in new ideas resourced from places other than normative theology) and in a conservative context (which desires to more clearly articulate and defend accepted normative theology) (Linnemann, 1990, pp.83-103).

---

#### 4:5 THE FOUR VOICES OF THEOLOGY AND THE CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL CONTEXT

---

---

##### 4:5:1 A CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL ARTICULATION OF NORMATIVE THEOLOGY

---

Brower-Latz (2014, p.3) notes how there is a certain DNA or 'genetic inheritance' which informs Christian practice, central to which would be normative theology, such as the teaching and interpretation of Scripture by leading figures in a group's history. Leach (2015, p.24) argues that the normative voice (specifically Scripture) would be critically implicated in the development and training of church leaders who then promulgate this to congregants. Schumacher (2013, pp.17-18) has stated that normative theology can be seen as the vanguard of legitimacy. These comments

would echo true for the context of conservative evangelicalism where the centrally important source, or rich depository of normative theology, is the Bible. As one interviewee put it

We have got a guide book and map and everything else there in the Word. Every situation you can think of you can find an answer to in the Bible (Les, aged 74, CH3:INT8).

Conservative evangelical formal theology also teaches how the Bible is not an archaic book remote from life but 'the most practical and up-to-date book in the world' which 'has revealed the cause of our troubles and the only possible cure of all our ills' (Lloyd-Jones, 2010, p.124). In this respect, normative theology (specifically the Bible) for conservative evangelicals operates from a position of authority within a hierarchical theological structure, often handed down from generation to generation with little having changed. This could be defined as an accepted 'canon' or collection of authoritative Scripture contained in the Bible with 'canon' being originally defined as a 'measuring reed' and hence a standard or norm (Carson, Moo and Morris, 1992, p.487).

My own fieldwork revealed how for conservative evangelicals, the task of maintaining a strong hold upon biblical truths in the face of an ever changing culture (that includes liberal denominational Christianity) is a strong theme that they grapple with, and this has further been noted in formal theology (Stott, 1992, pp.159-172; Murray, 2000). In this sense, the normative theology of Scripture and church teaching would be the central foundation that is closely followed. The conducting of my ethnography revealed how the Bible takes a central place in public meetings and also in personal study (CH3:INT7, CH4:SERM6) and as reiterated in conservative evangelical literature (Whitney, 1991, Chapters 2-3). The Bible is seen as 'the Holy infallible Word' (CH2:SERM11), and conservative evangelicals are expected to learn the Scriptures from childhood (CH2:SERM5) and to study the Bible every day (CH3:SERM10) so that the Word can be applied in any given situation. Furthermore, 'when people abide in God's Word, God abides in them' (CH1:SERM2) and the Holy Spirit can bring passages of Scripture to mind once they have been learnt for the purposes of help and application (CH3:SERM5). Although generally not wanting to be labelled 'fundamentalist', conservative evangelicals do believe in a 'fundamental' application to their lives of what they believe the Bible reveals to them about the Christian faith. The central importance of the Bible to conservative evangelicals is seen in how new believers are commonly referred to as 'babes in Christ' whilst those longer in the faith, with more knowledge of the Bible, are seen as more mature Christians. Conservative evangelicals are likely to memorise verses of the Bible as a spiritual

discipline, often from a young age.<sup>43</sup> There is a belief in the veracity of the Bible and that it needs to be preached and applied in its entirety. Parts of it cannot be ignored as perhaps is more prevalent in liberal churches. There is a belief in the inspiration of Scripture, that 'the Holy Spirit came upon scriptural writers to record exact truth, accurate and inerrant' so that the Bible can be trusted as having divine authority (CH2:SERM5, CH4:SERM8) or a 'God breathed revelation' (CH1:SERM8). These would no doubt stand in contrast to the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' often employed in modern academic practical theology (Bennet, 2013, p.50). I would conclude that for conservative evangelicals the following themes are paramount and that these attitudes toward the Bible are also seen as rooted in the Bible: that the Bible has authority as the inspired word of God;<sup>44</sup> that it is without error;<sup>45</sup> that it contains everything necessary for effective Christian or godly living;<sup>46</sup> and therefore Christians should use it as an authoritative guide in relation to the decisions they make in life.<sup>47</sup> The belief is that the Bible is 'true, reliable, unchangeable and inspired' (CH4:SERM6) and this can be evidenced most literally with a belief in creationism.

The vast majority of interviewees expressed a belief in a literal six day creation as stated in Genesis 1 (CH4:INT1, CH4:INT4, CH3:INT7, CH2:INT1) and this position is also reiterated within formal theology (Lloyd-Jones, 2003a, vol.1, pp.129-132,). Glen was asked about his position with regard to creationism:

Personally I believe in a literal six day creation, mainly not so much on Genesis but Exodus Chapter 20, where it seems there irrefutable that God worked for six days and rested on the seventh and we are to rest on the seventh. To me I can't see getting round it being a literal day (Glen, aged 64, CH2: INT3).

Richard was asked a similar question:

CC: So would you see the literal days of creation in Genesis?

---

<sup>43</sup> All the churches I had placements at provided Sunday school lessons for children. Part of this involves children being introduced to biblical stories and Scriptures. Children were often rewarded for being able to memorise verses from the Bible and present these at times such as Summer Holiday clubs and special services at Christmas, Easter and/or Harvest time.

<sup>44</sup> See 2 Peter 1:20-21, 2 Timothy 3:16 and Matthew 5:18.

<sup>45</sup> See Luke 16:17, John 10:35, Psalm 12:6.

<sup>46</sup> See 2 Peter 1:3, Psalm 19: 7-11, 2 Timothy 3: 14-17.

<sup>47</sup> See Psalm 119:4, Psalm 1: 1-3, Joshua 1:8.



RESP: Oh yes I believe in the truth of the Bible, the veracity of the Bible if that is the right word. So the words that are spoken, the words that are written are true (Richard, aged 83, CH4: INT6).

These two responses show that absolute authority is given to biblical interpretation, with Glen stating 'there is no way getting round it' or 'if that is how the Bible says it is, then that is how it is' echoed by Richard who simply states that the words of the Bible have absolute truth or authority.

Conservative evangelicalism, with regards to creationism, holds tightly to all biblical revelation no matter how science may contradict this; something that would be in contrast to more progressive evangelical interpretations that incorporate evolutionary thinking in relation to the origins of life (Morris, 2008, pp.26-32; Cairns, 1998, pp.104-106). With regards to the age of the earth, most common was an acceptance of a young earth of perhaps 6,000 years old as would fit in with calculations made from biblical genealogies (CH1:INT4, CH3:INT10, CH2:INT6, CH4:INT9). It was also explained how when coming to faith as a conservative evangelical there was something of a 'letting go' of previous beliefs such as evolution, however strongly they had been held, and just simply accepting a biblical position of a young earth (CH2:INT4, CH4:INT4). In these instances, the Bible had now become a higher authority with the power to nullify previous knowledge systems that were operant prior to conversion. Biological evolution between species over a vast time span is seen by conservative evangelicals as a misinterpretation of data (CH4:INT10) (Cairns, 1998, pp.104-5).

For conservative evangelicals to oppose biblical teachings would in many ways be seen as rejecting God. Indeed, a core aspect or sign of being what is deemed to be a genuine Christian, or 'born again', for conservative evangelicals, is a willingness to accept teachings of the Bible as the revelation of God, to believe them and apply them in life (Pastor CH3, 2013, Per. Comm., 22<sup>nd</sup> May). A belief in creationism is not surprisingly seen as a foundation of their tradition so they believe that without biblical creationism the Christian tradition could literally fall apart. One interviewee likened a belief in creationism as keeping God firmly on the pedestal of the Christian's mind, and that when it is removed or weakened, it is just as when Adam and Eve brought sin into the world: it is the individual's attempt to take a step independent of God, a distancing that undermines faith and ultimately leads to atheism (CH1:INT4). Even interviewees who had experience studying science subjects like physics, genetics and chemistry did not reveal that this provided any changed reasoning in relation to their belief and faith in what the Bible taught about creationism, as they still held biblical revelation to be a higher authority than their scientific research (CH2:INT1, CH2:INT2, CH3:INT9). This logic can be seen with a church leader who explained his position with regards to biblical authority: that it is always higher than scientific interpretations and beliefs.

I believe that rather than interpreting Scripture in the light of science, I believe as evangelicals, it should be the other way round. That's how we interpret personal experience, that's how we interpret history, we bring it to Scripture (Luke, aged 47, CH2:INT6).<sup>48</sup>

A high regard for Scripture can be seen in the pastoral claim, backed up by my personal observation of the congregations' responses, of how Sunday services are a specific time when God speaks to the congregation through the reading and preaching of Scripture (Pastor CH4, 2015, Pers. Comm., Dec 9<sup>th</sup>), or 'reveals His will to His people' (CH1:SERM1) and that there should be a 'delight in this law of the Lord' (CH3:SERM4). Normative theology is taught in a way to influence espoused and operant theology and that 'we can quench the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives if we don't pay enough attention to the Bible' (CH2:SERM8).

Conservative evangelical preaching is most commonly done in a strictly expository style (MacArthur ed. 1992; Olyott, 2005, Ch.1), or that chapters and books of the Bible will be preached word by word, often over a period of several weeks, months or years<sup>49</sup> and preaching in a conservative evangelical context rarely uses a topical programme or style. The pastoral claim in conservative evangelical churches is that exegesis involves the opening up of Scripture as far as possible, purely as it is laid out in the Bible, as the 'careful systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original intended meaning' (Fee and Stuart, 2003, p.23). It is believed this is best done with the help of people with expertise, such as church leaders, and that with hermeneutics the purpose is to 'seek the contemporary relevance of ancient texts' in their application to the here and now (Fee and Stuart, 2003, pp.24,29). Here differentiation is made between historical and normative authoritativeness, or differences between commands for people in historical times, which may be temporary, and teachings which continue to be normatively authoritative (Erickson, 1985, pp.258-9). Although expository Bible teaching allows for differences in personality, background and interests so there is a variety in the development, application and delivery of messages, there is also the possibility that such personal traits can hinder as well as facilitate accurate exegesis.

Other sources of normative theology include creeds and statements of faith. For the four churches studied during this project, these included historical sources such as the 1689 London

---

<sup>48</sup> The position of putting the Bible first and evaluating other things in light of this would be seen as a directive from Scriptures relating to the authority of the Bible such as mentioned previously in footnotes 44-47, p.105.

<sup>49</sup> Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones took 260 sermons over eight years (1954-62) to preach through Ephesians during Sunday morning services, and for Friday evening Bible studies preached from Romans through the years 1955-68 (Davies, 2012, p.88).

Baptist Confession of Faith<sup>50</sup> and the related amended Westminster Confession. Some of the churches would draw upon these sources to form a briefer summary of their beliefs to include in church pamphlets and on their websites. One church pastor noted how 'historic creeds represent for conservative evangelicals truths that have been hammered out in fires of controversy at different stages of church history' (Pastor CH4, 2015, Pers. Comm., Dec 9<sup>th</sup>). In this respect, church history could be seen as a form of normative theology, in that the conservative evangelical church does not start from scratch, but rather looks back to learn from historical figures. This could also be seen as a type of formal theology, in that publications other than the Bible influence normative theology, as discussed in greater detail below. Other main creed sources used are the current doctrinal statement of the EMW and that of the FIEC.<sup>51</sup>

According to the four voices model as laid out by Cameron *et al.* (2010), church liturgy also forms part of normative theology and this may be clearly evident in Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. However, liturgy is not so easily distinguishable in the conservative evangelical context as many within this group would reject the idea of having a 'church liturgy' (Pastor CH4, 2015, Pers. Comm., Dec 9<sup>th</sup>; Pastor CH2, 2015, Pers. Comm., Dec 16<sup>th</sup>). In a conservative evangelical context things are 'stripped back': church buildings are deliberately plain, for example having no paintings, stained glass windows, statues, or priests with specific robes. This represents the simplicity of worship, and a raised pulpit represents how people sit under the authority of the Word of God and prevents what would be deemed as distractions from focusing upon the preached Bible.

The conservative evangelical tradition in Wales, perhaps therefore has more similarity with Puritan worship. For conservative evangelicals, Scripture alone is seen as the inerrant Word of God, as stated in Clause 3 of the EMW Constitution (Davies, 1984, p.52) or what is known as 'special revelation' compared to 'general revelation' in creation (Berkhof, 1968, pp.11-21; Weeks, 1988, pp.15-25). In this respect normative theology, specifically the Bible, can be seen as a bulwark of tradition, highly conservative in nature, resistant to intrusions (Bromiley, 1970, pp.3-11) and the driving force of conservative evangelical Christian life, feeding what Pallant (2014, p.1) has described as 'approved theology'.

---

<sup>50</sup>This can be viewed at <http://www.salisburyemmanuel.org.uk/1689%20London%20Baptist%20Confession%20of%20Faith.pdf> (Accessed 21/03/2016).

<sup>51</sup>The EMW's statement of faith can be found at <https://www.emw.org.uk/leadership/theological-training-course/statement-faith/> (Accessed 18/3/2016) and the FIEC's at <https://fiec.org.uk/about-us/beliefs> (Accessed 18/3/2016).

The centrality given to the Bible and its teaching would mean that sermons most comfortably fit into normative theology, however in reiterating during sermons what evangelicals should do it could be seen as an espoused theology. It comes as a challenge, often to modify or change behaviour, so it is more in line with normative theology and that this application of Scripture should be central in congregants' lives (CH4:SERM8). In other words, we should see what God says in His Word and then trust Him (CH4:SERM9). It is an espoused theology attempting to articulate normative theology which is continually acting to potentially change operant theology. In contrast with more liberal interpretations, the belief is that 'we must know our Bibles so we can be vigilant and discerning' toward those who preach from their own imagination (CH2:SERM17) or teaching what is not deemed to be biblical. This theme also has more historic attention from formal theologians such as Jonathan Edwards' chapter entitled 'Ministers to preach not their own wisdom but the Word of God' (2002 [17--], pp.111-132). This is often reiterated in relation to Anglican figures who publicly testify to not believing in central tenets of the conservative evangelical faith such as the virgin birth or resurrection of Jesus Christ (CH1:SERM5), or that 'liberals do not submit, but pick and choose what to believe' (CH4:SERM6) or change the evangelical gospel to universal salvation (CH4:SERM18). Such positions lead many conservative evangelicals to question the authenticity of much of the professing church and to question whether they are truly converted (CH3:SERM8).

Hymns, as they proclaim biblical truths, are an aspect of normative theology, yet in stating 'what we do' to the community using them as a means of worshipping God, they also form an important part of espoused theology and this points to one of the difficulties in the four voices model, in that overlap exists as the voices are not totally discrete or separate. Most common authors of hymns used during this ethnography include historical figures such as: Charles Wesley (1707-88) and John Wesley (1703-91), Isaac Watts (1674-1748), William Cowper (1731-1800), Philip Doddridge (1702-51), William Gadsby (1773-1844), Samuel Medley (1738-99), Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847), John Newton (1725-1807), Horatius Bonar (1808-89), William Williams (1717-91), C.H. Spurgeon (1834-92), Horatio Gates Spafford (1828-88), Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-79), Frank Houghton (1894-1972), Philip Bliss (1838-76) and Anna Letitia Waring (1820-1910). In addition, Psalms taken from the Scottish Psalter; and hymns of more modern figures such as; Timothy Dudley-

Smith (b.1926), Paul Cook (b.1932), G.S. Harrison (b.1935), Stuart Townend (b.1963), Keith Getty (b.1974), Kristyn Getty (b.1980) and Graham Kendrick (b.1950).<sup>52</sup>

Church declarations, newsletters, reports and church websites are also rich sources of espoused theology, often giving outsiders a window into what the group says they do, such as their goals within society. In detailing who they are (and why) to others, conservative evangelicals' personal testimony and witness could also be seen as a form of espoused theology. In particular for my own ethnography, interviews provided a rich resource of espoused theology in addition to an even stronger focus upon peoples' actions.

---

#### 4:5:3 A CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL ARTICULATION OF OPERANT THEOLOGY

---

Ethnographic research provides a method which is best suited to collect data which is rich in operant theology such as the observation of church services and Christian lifestyles. Specifically the personal interview encounter provided a means of participants to evidence their operant theology. During interviews I gave respondents the opportunity to talk vividly about what they do and why they do it (their attitudes and behaviours), in relation to creation and the environment, which was often richly embedded with theology. This was aided by the use of a simple interview format covering a small number of themes that allowed further probing to take place.<sup>53</sup> Operant theology, or practical actions of Christians as actions of faith, is regularly aligned to how theology may be consciously articulated or described, which is 'espoused theology' (Cameron *et al.* 2010, p.52). The interview also reveals the links between operant theology and espoused theology (or how close the match is between what they do and what they say they do), and also in referring to the Bible and church teaching, it provides further insights into the links between operant theology and normative theology.

Conservative evangelicals in the main do not use set prayers devised by church leaders or congregants, although occasionally the corporate reading of the Lord's Prayer or a psalm may be

---

<sup>52</sup> However, it should be noted that not all four churches equally used a mix of traditional and modern hymns. One church used no modern hymns but only traditional, another used modern hymns extremely rarely and mostly traditional, whilst a third church used a mixture of modern and traditional, and one church used far more modern than traditional hymns. More details about the hymn books used during this ethnography can be found on p.82 and footnote 39, p.83.

<sup>53</sup> An overview of the interview template can be seen in appendix 4, and the conducting of interviews was discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.

undertaken.<sup>54</sup> It is even claimed that ‘The Lord Jesus Christ is our worship leader/liturgist<sup>55</sup> and High Priest and if the pastor leads the service under the principles of the Word of God, we see the Lord Jesus as the One who preaches the Word’ (Pastor CH4, 2015, Pers. Comm., Dec 9<sup>th</sup>) as the pastor attempts to reflect those truths like a mirror. This leads to what is known as the regulative principle which was more evident in the churches I studied, whereby if something is not in accordance with principles and directives of specifically NT Scripture then it is not practised, in contrast to the alternative approach that it is acceptable to do something as long as it is not specifically forbidden in Scripture, which may be evident in other churches. This again reiterates how in a conservative evangelical context the Bible’s influence as a manual of teaching is centrally important to the spiritual life of congregants and the development of their operant voice (CH4:SERM6).

In particular the reading and preaching of what conservative evangelicals deem to be the Word of God is seen as the high point of the Sunday service and the congregation’s response to this preached Word, at the time and over coming weeks and months is the ‘climax of worship’ in a willingness to submit and be obedient to their Lord, to effectively learn from this teaching and apply it in their lives (Pastor CH2, 2016, Pers. Comm., March 9<sup>th</sup>; Smith 2000, pp.125-133). Furthermore, ‘because it is God’s Word, we must listen—and obey’ (Fee and Stuart, 2003, p.21) and this obedience must be outward and inward (Olyott, 2014, p.32). The belief is that the preaching of God’s Word comes with the authority of God (CH4:SERM17) and in relation to the four voices model, that their operant theology should be aligned to and shaped by this normative theology, or as stated in formal theology ‘submission to the authority of Scripture is the way to mature discipleship’ (Stott, 1992, p.173). Indeed, my research uncovered how, for some taking part in this study, a sense of guilt would be felt if it was noticed that their operant or espoused theology did not match normative theology closely enough, in as much as it would be felt that they were in error in moving away from God’s teaching and direction (CH3:INT10) and a cause of irritation if this was evidenced in others (CH3:INT7). This would be in sharp contrast to the interpretation that operant theology should be legitimised and accepted on an equal footing even when it contradicts Scripture, and given the power to challenge and change church teaching, such as put forward by Dillen (2014, p.230). For conservative evangelicals, such a position would be seen as heretical since reading the Bible should elicit reverence, amazement, gratitude and even tears of joy as ‘God speaks’ through His Scripture (Olyott, 2007, pp.38-39). However, I would add that there is a substantial difference between operant theology overturning normative theology, in as much as presenting an opposite or

---

<sup>54</sup> Two of the churches included in this study occasionally did this, whilst the other two did not.

<sup>55</sup> This idea is based upon Scriptures such as Psalm 22:22 and Hebrews 8:2.

alternative position from what the Bible stipulates, and operant theology challenging normative theology in a sense of desiring a renegotiation of existing teachings from the Bible or a refocusing upon neglected Scripture. For liberals the former may be acceptable yet for conservatives the latter is possible. It is the fear of such change in a liberal context which leads conservative evangelicals to exercise a highly refined discernment in relation to academic theology.

---

#### 4:5:4 A CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL ARTICULATION OF FORMAL THEOLOGY

---

Formal theology, that is academic theology and dialogue with other disciplines, particularly in more liberal contexts, has the potential to be an engine of change, as discussed earlier in 4:2:1. Shepherd (2012, p.124) describes how the formal voice 'may offer insight on current or future practice'. The formal voice denotes power, expertise, and opportunity for expression, although this is something that can be abused (Dillen, 2014, pp.228-31). In this sense formal theology can be the breeding ground of innovation, problem solving and a catalyst for influencing the other three voices. However, the fact that there is normally not one formal voice but a multitude of voices with a diversity of views further complicates the place of the formal voice within the liberal context (Dillen, 2014, p.231).

For conservative evangelicals however, the total reliance and dependence upon the Bible as divine revelation results in a reluctance to engage with other disciplines, which form the other aspect of formal theology. In particular 'How can a system of knowledge created by human beings challenge a system of knowledge that claims to be given by God?' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.83). For this project, the beliefs espoused in the field of secular 'environmental ethics' can contrast deeply with the systematic theological engagement of conservative evangelicals when unpacking biblical environmental themes. The level of authority conservative evangelicals give to the Bible prevents an open or detailed engagement with environmental ethics.

In the conservative evangelical context, when formal theology moves further from accepted normative theology, it is not taken seriously and therefore loses the potential it has for influence. Furthermore, other disciplines are often seen as being undergirded by differing world-views that would be incompatible with that of conservative evangelicalism and are therefore rarely drawn upon (CH3:INT9, CH4:INT8). In the conservative evangelical context I believe formal theology links into a hierarchical pattern of (normative-espoused-operant) theologies in a two-way relationship with normative theology. For conservative evangelicals formal theology engages with the Bible and conservative evangelical tradition, helping to understand, articulate, promulgate and in many ways

defend it, feeding back into normative theology at the level of church teaching. Yet a high level of discernment would be exercised in the selection of formal theology.

An obvious starting point in identifying what conservative evangelicals would accept as formal theology would be how academic theology could be deemed as having either an 'insider' or 'outsider' status (CH2:SERM3). For instance, conservative evangelicals would in no way accept that all theologies emanating from the academy should be given a formal voice and be taken seriously, but rather only those aligning with a stricter conservative evangelical position. However, I am aware this could also be the case for other groups or denominations and there may be a more general hesitancy toward academic theology from church congregants who may find it difficult to engage with or even unnecessary. Dixon (2012) has also reiterated whether or not a formal voice is always necessary, as to put forward the view that it is could give greater power to individuals doing formal theology and take away the credence of normative and operant theology by drowning this with the formal voice (p.145).

For conservative evangelicals the formal theological voice would be those people that they see as maintaining a correct and orthodox normative theology, for instance those working at more conservative seminaries, Bible colleges, and previous and present conservative evangelical preachers. Those they see as outsiders (often working in more liberal university theology departments, or preachers in liberal denominations), they would see as attempting to do the opposite—to break down and overturn aspects of normative theology, to challenge biblical teaching and therefore realign or overturn official church teaching in some way, by elevating human ideas and reason, something seen as acting against God's supremacy and resulting in a weakened church (Pink, 1975, pp.28-29). Whereas insiders would be seen as more clearly articulating normative theology without challenging it (CH2:SERM10) (Olyott, 2005, pp.35-37). The way conservative evangelicals could perceive liberal theology from the academy can be envisioned in terms of a 'battering ram', aimed at 'breaking down the castle door of normative theology', and is something which conservative evangelicals would be very wary of and resistant to in desiring to maintain biblical truths (CH2:SERM11). Or as Packer bluntly states 'If this truth (*Bible*) is rejected or perverted, faith is overthrown and men come under the power of a lie, with terrible results' (Packer, 1958, p.43). This could also be seen in church history as conservative evangelicals would see a defence of the faith being made at numerous points and they therefore seek to also maintain tradition (Pastor CH4, 2015, Pers. Comm., Dec 10<sup>th</sup>). Conservative evangelicals would reject much of what is known as historic 'Higher Criticism' for instance (Davies, 2012, pp.116-118; Cairns, 1998, p.109) (although accepting most Lower Criticism) and more generally see dangers in the more modern multi-faceted



field of 'biblical criticism' (Archer, 1994; Guthrie, 1979, pp.438-441, 454-456). Resulting in 'the lost word' and an enfeebled church (Packer, 1998 [1979], pp.22-35, 84-90) because 'the spirit of the age' elevates man and diminishes God, like looking at Him through the wrong end of a telescope (Packer, 1975, p.6). Or as taught from the pulpit, that 'many theologians do not know the Lord and deny the great truth they are writing about' (CH2:SERM21). In this sense I would criticise the view that Cameron and Duce (2012, p.xxxi) put forward as a naïve interpretation of formal theology, when they define it as simply 'work to understand the tradition', one of the four voices which when in conversation with the others can mutually enrich and be enriched. Yet formal theology is commonly used in a liberal context to 'change' the tradition with human ideas and reason or move the church in unbiblical directions, as also noted in church teaching (CH2:SERM17). This is just another example of how the tensions and dynamics at work in the four voices model in conservative evangelical contexts are in reality more complex than thought by the model's authors.

Conservative evangelical church pastors, in their preparation of sermons, will often use material from published theologians or preachers, those they trust as having an insider status, in helping with their exegesis and teaching of the congregation, and will occasionally cite them during the presentation of a sermon. In this sense, formal theology feeds the four voice model from the top with normative theology. Most commonly in the churches I attended, pastors mentioned the following, firstly historical figures such as: Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), the famous Welsh protestant preacher, teacher and medical doctor, who was minister of Westminster Chapel in London for almost 30 years; John Owen (1616-1683), the Reformed theologian and leader of the English Puritan movement; Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the American Congregationalist protestant theologian, Pastor and revivalist preacher; and C. H. Spurgeon (1834-92) Baptist preacher and author. More contemporary figures mentioned included: Dr John Stott (1921-2011), the evangelical Anglican, author and Christian leader; J.I. Packer (b.1926), also an evangelical Anglican, renowned author in the Reformed tradition, and Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia; Stuart Olyott (b.1942) preacher, lecturer, author and a leader of pastors in Wales, previously having taught at the EMW training college in Bryntirion; Dr Don Carson (b.1946), the Reformed evangelical author, pastor, preacher, scholar and Research Professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Illinois; Dr Wayne Grudem (b.1948) Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at Phoenix Seminary and conservative evangelical author; and Dr Sinclair Ferguson (b.1948), Scottish reformed theologian, author and Professor at Redeemer Seminary, Dallas.<sup>56</sup> Other

---

<sup>56</sup> Names compiled from personal communication with pastors, from sermons during fieldwork, and other sources such as extracts mentioned in church bulletins.

names mentioned more briefly, or in only one of the four churches were: Augustine, John Calvin, John Murray, Iain Murray, John Piper, Louis Berkov, F.F. Bruce, Sydney Greidanus, John MacArthur, Dale Ralph Davis, Donald McCloud, Brian Chapell, Peter O'Brien, Douglass Moo, Tim Keller, Richard Bauckham, and C.S. Lewis. Also mentioned was the work of larger organisations such as the Proclamation Trust with authors such as Dick Lucas and Vaughan Roberts. This type of formal theology reinforces a traditional normative theology, and in particular how biblical doctrines are interpreted and presented by church pastors for congregants to follow, and in this way will influence the formation of attitudes and behaviours.

#### 4:6 DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE FOUR VOICES

---

Despite Cameron *et al.* (2010) describing the four voices as a non-hierarchical structure in which each interacts with and speaks to the other and how the operant voice can even gain precedence within the four voices in a liberal space, I have shown that in a specifically conservative evangelical context this would not be the case. Here a hierarchy is clearly evident, with normative theology, and specifically the Bible, being prominent. This would then filter down in a linear manner to an espoused followed by an operant theology.

Normative theology, primarily the Bible, is something conservative evangelicals would see as presenting unchanging truths: that there is an accepted belief in 'the authority of the Bible' and its inspiration (Lloyd-Jones, 2003a, vol. 1, pp.22-33). I would suggest that in the conservative evangelical context, normative theology could best be understood acting as a 'thermostat' or 'regulating valve'. In effect normative theology prevents operant and espoused theology from moving too far from the normative position. For instance if operant theology gets 'too hot', in moving too far from biblical teachings, normative theology will then bring it back to an acceptable norm. Likewise if operant theology gets 'too cold', as in failing to propagate biblical teachings, then normative theology has the potential to bring it back up to scratch. Indeed, conservative evangelical pastors would see this as part of their job, yet other influences could make this problematic in some instances. Formal theology could be seen as in a two way relationship with normative theology; in both feeding from normative theology (such as the Bible) and then feeding back into normative theology (such as church teaching) in a way which helps understand, reinforce and articulate the normative theological position.

Espoused theology could in many ways be placed in between normative and operant theology, with a desire to reflect normative theology, although not always followed through to operant theology, partly because conservative evangelicals see themselves as works in progress. In theory being born again (as expressed as an espoused theology and taught in normative theology) means accepting the normative theology from the Bible (to be expressed in an operant theology): both to practise what is preached from the pulpit, and also to practise what is stated in their own espoused theology. Operant theology then reflects a faith which involves lifestyles and actions representative of their espoused theology which in turn is shaped by normative theology. The most striking difference in articulating the four voices model in a conservative evangelical rather than liberal context is how it gains a stronger linear and hierarchical structure.

#### 4:7 TOWARDS A MODIFIED FOUR VOICE MODEL OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

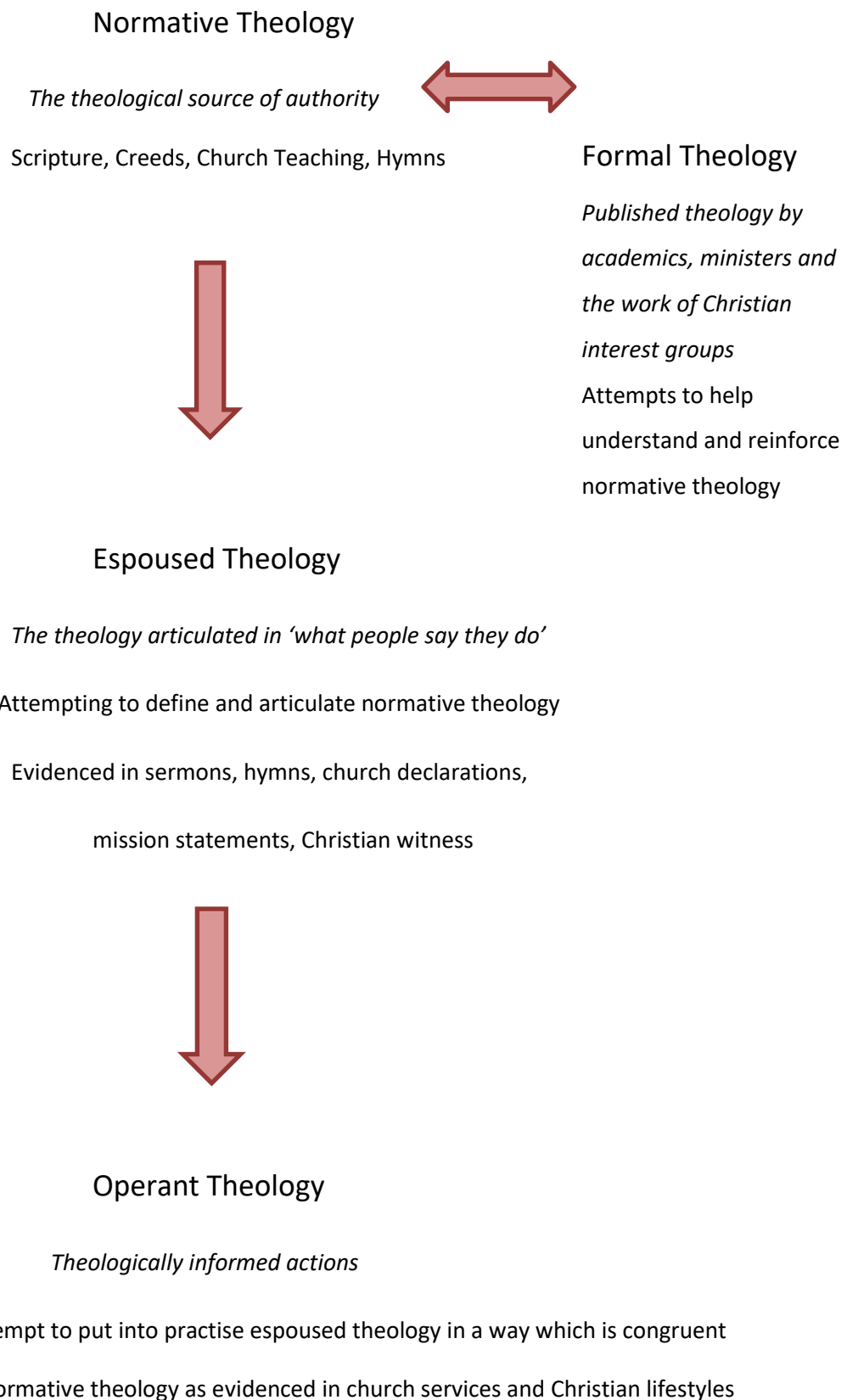
---

Having started with the four voice model of Cameron *et al.* (2010), as shown in Figure 14, I have now modified the four voices theory to the conservative evangelical context having previously justified my reasons for doing this, and this new model can be seen in Figure 15.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup>Further insights into the workings of the model and suggestions for more detailed modifications can be seen throughout the presentation of data in Chapters 5-7 and also summarised in the concluding Chapter 9.

FIGURE 15: THE LINEAR AND HIERARCHICAL FOUR VOICE MODEL OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION



For this project a core research question is how a particular understanding of biblical authority relates directly to the formation of environmental attitudes and behaviours. As an ethnographic researcher, this foundation led to a need to gather data from conservative evangelicals that authenticated the way the Bible spoke about creation and the environment. In bringing the data I collected during fieldwork, together with the new four voice theory of analysis, I will articulate how certain levels of biblical authority are evidenced within these four voices and the dynamics between them. Due to how the four voices operate in a more linear and hierarchical nature within the conservative evangelical context as shown in the modified model created in Fig. 15, I will give a far greater precedence, priority and focus to normative theology and especially the Bible, when analysing data. I will engage the modified four voices theory as a lens or template—to both see more clearly and understand more deeply—the ways in which a certain attitude towards the authority of the Bible affects the formulation of attitudes and behaviours in relation to the environment. The modified four voice model represents a unique and interesting format in the conservative evangelical context, specifically in what the different voices involve, how the dynamics between them operate and more specifically what this can tell us about the relationship between conservative evangelicalism and environmental attitudes and behaviours. This will further understanding of both the extent to which relationships reiterate that which is expected from the modified hierarchical structure of the four voices and also the extent to which analysis of data feeds back into the four voices theory setup, perhaps in unexpected ways. Firstly, I will show this via how ‘creation’, what broader society may call ‘natural world’ or ‘environment’, is valued by the community being studied and how these ideas have been moulded by their faith.

### 5:1 INTRODUCTION

---

In reviewing previous empirical work in Chapter 2, I showed how there was a need for a more focused study to address the Christianity and environment relationship, rooted in qualitative research methods that were presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 then identified and discussed my chosen model of theological reflection. In the presentation of data in Chapters 5-7, an attempt will be made to produce what has been described in ethnographic terminology by Clifford Geertz (1973) as a 'thick' description of events: to present a rich and detailed multi-layered account of the community being studied.<sup>58</sup> I will present and record this in a way that lets this community 'tell their own story', of what creation or the environment means to them, combined with an internal analysis, before the contextualisation of results takes place in Chapter 8. In other words, to describe what is happening with the aid of direct quotations before the analytical lens answers the question as to why this is so, and finally in what ways this offers original insights. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 therefore present and analyse the data collected for this project; focusing upon experiencing creation in Chapter 5, doctrinal interpretation in relation to creation in Chapter 6, and resultant environmental attitudes and behaviours in Chapter 7. This is based upon themes that emerged from data analysis and the modified 'four voices model' of theological reflection is then used to conceptualise and articulate results. Firstly, in as much as helping understand the relationships that exist between the four voices as evidenced in my own data and secondly, how this feeds back into my own modified four voices theory of analysis. This will give a greater understanding of the internal workings of the template itself, and show if any further modifications are needed in light of its use with my own data. Another reason for presenting a substantial number of quotations in these chapters is that this data is original and provides a level of detailed empirical evidence that is lacking in previous studies addressing the Christianity and environment relationship.

Data from interviews has shown how conservative evangelicals initially provide vivid description and detail as to how they value and experience creation. Most prominent is how evangelicals see the beauty of creation as mentioned by 29 interviewees. Secondly, that creation is something to enjoy as mentioned by 19 respondents. Interviewees then mentioned the importance of being thankful for creation as noted by 10 respondents and 16 respondents saw creation as leading them toward a sense of praise for the Creator. These themes form an extremely positive

---

<sup>58</sup> For more background information on the term 'thick description', see Ponterotto (2006).

engagement with creation and are rich in operant theology, and as noted in Chapter 2, such positive relationships were largely missing from previous empirical studies that only focused upon negative correlations.

## 5:2 THE PLACE OF CONVERSION

---

Central to this positive evaluation of creation seems to have been the place that interviewees give to their conversion: firstly in how things changed in their appreciation of creation after their conversion and secondly, how those converted to the conservative evangelical faith experience creation more generally. A total of 19 respondents spoke in some way about the place of their conversion to the conservative evangelical faith and how this related to their thoughts and feelings about creation. In relation to normative theology, the need for conversion is a central teaching within conservative evangelicalism (CH3:SERM14, CH3:SERM17, CH4:SERM14, CH4:SERM24, CH2:SERM1) and in the historic creeds (Chapters 12-13, Baptist Confession of Faith). After conversion, conservative evangelicals see themselves as ‘new creations’ as Scripture describes them<sup>59</sup> and as also denoted in formal theology (Murray, 1973, p.88). Some therefore mentioned this during interview: in that ideas about creation should not just rest on God’s physical creation but also His spiritual creation. Michael explained this as follows, perhaps influenced by teaching in his own church (CH2:SERM7):

God created the world, but you could also argue when we become Christians we are made into a new creation as well. I think that is creation as well. So it is not just the aspect of the physical world coming into being but also through Christ us being renewed (Michael, aged 18, CH2:INT5).

One of the ramifications of being a ‘new creation’ for attitudes toward the environment are that creation also becomes new in the eyes of the converted (CH4:INT3). This position of how their view of the environment around them changed after their spiritual conversion to the conservative evangelical faith was common. Paramount in this was seeing the depths of the beauty of creation, the vividness of creation such as with colours or detail, and giving proper thanks to God for creation; all of which had been largely missing from their understanding prior to conversion. This was explained in terms of ‘I saw it with new eyes is all I can say’ (CH2:INT3), whilst another described the same experience of conversion as having a cataract operation then being able to see the real beauty of creation, such as the colours that had previously been only dim (CH4:INT2). Others simply stated

---

<sup>59</sup> For Christian conversion and the new creation, see 2 Cor 5:17 and Eph 4:22.

how their 'spiritual rebirth or awakening' opened the door to a real appreciation of creation (CH3:INT3).

Linda explained the day of her conversion as follows:

I truly believe I was baptised with the Holy Spirit that particular day and suddenly the world just changed for me, it began to look brighter. The colours were more vivid, and everything just seemed different from the day before (Linda, aged 69, CH3:INT7).

Here Linda's experience gives testimony to a supernatural act of God which has a vivid effect upon her operant theology and radically changes the way she experiences creation. Giving testimony of this is also a way for her to witness to people via an espoused theology of her experience.

Doreen explained vividly how after 'being born again'<sup>60</sup> she started seeing God everywhere and appreciating what he had done through creation, showing how for conservative evangelicals God can be centre stage when interpreting creation:

All the Scripture came alive and was living to me, at that point I started to see God everywhere: in everything He had created, right down to the flowers, the sky, the sun and moon: I could see it all as wonderful [...] as the Scripture says the firmament of His handiwork, I could see Him as someone who had bent down and created all this and it was His handiwork [...] the vastness of the universe and it was just overwhelming and I could hardly take it in. It was just wonderful: I could see Him everywhere, almost feel Him everywhere, everything had a different meaning (Doreen, aged 73, CH4:INT3).

Doreen interestingly links in detail her normative relation with the Bible and her operant experience of creation, almost as if the two are fused together as the Scriptures and creation both came alive to her, both testifying to the God she had come to know through conversion. No doubt she could further explain this in terms of the working of the Holy Spirit in her life. In terms of dynamics between the four voices, Doreen's experience shows how critically closely related the Bible can be to a person's operant experience. God had manifested himself to her in a very personal and powerful way through the Bible and creation. Glen explained how his eyes were opened to the order and diversity of creation after his conversion:

I remember when I became a Christian. I gave my life to Christ in the December of that year, and the next Spring it was as though I saw Spring for the first time in my life. You know I

---

<sup>60</sup> Conservative evangelicals believe being 'born again' or being 'born from above', having a spiritual birth, is a hallmark of a genuine Christian and can be understood with Scriptures such as John 3:3 and John 1:12-13.



couldn't believe the differences when I saw something like a bud, the detail, the order, diversified order is possibly a good way of putting it, every blade of grass is different yet you can see them all as blades of grass. You could say the sky is a landscape that is continually being re-painted, a dynamic living portrait, forever changing but consistent (Glen, aged 64, CH2:INT3).

As vividly described in the examples above, the normative church teaching of the need for individuals to be converted, which was regularly evidenced during fieldwork (CH4:SERM3, CH4:SERM10, CH1:SERM10, CH2:SERM1) is experienced in a vibrant operant theology. The normative teaching of conversion, when experienced, can be seen as creating ripples or shock waves that strongly influence the way creation is seen and experienced differently after the experience of conversion (CH2:INT3, CH4:INT3, CH3:INT7, CH2:INT5). However, this is not something pressed upon them from the 'outside in', perhaps like incorporating a normative doctrine, but is experienced from the 'inside out'. The experience and effects of conversion therefore show that normative theology can lead to operant theology in a unique way that contrasts with the pattern of internalising normative doctrines which will be seen in Chapter 6. Furthermore, this operant theology resulting from conversion is something that 'lets the heart sing' with joy and in praise and worship in a way which is individual and experiential. Yet formal theology also notes the importance of a Christian experience of joy in using the five senses to see the glory of God in the world (Piper, 2004, pp.175-206). Although conversion is taught as a central normative principle, the operant theology resulting from this is in some ways independent of normative teaching (such as conversion resulting in a deeper sensory perception of creation) although not in contradiction to normative teaching (as would be with pantheism). Interviewees therefore experience a creative dialogue which emerges in relation to what conversion means to them and their experience of creation, with freedom for expression and movement within their experience. It is an operant theology deeply lived and felt despite not being taught in normative theology, such as in sermons. With regards to the four voice model of theological reflection, this may alter our previous understanding, in that there may exist autonomous pockets of operant theology that are not clearly linked in a hierarchical structure, or that a normative voice can elicit an operant response, but then the diverse operant theologies which emerge are self-reinforcing and largely powered by further experience and operant theology rather than being tied to their normative starting point. A further interesting point is whether or not such a self-accentuating operant voice can ripple influence back into any of the other three theological voices. One such example as mentioned above would be the way operant theological experience can be reiterated to others as a testimony within an espoused theology. However, it would be much

more difficult for this to move further upstream to a renewed or more highly defined normative theology.

Having a heightened sense of awareness of the beauty and complexity of nature and that it was a product of God and not of random evolution was important in 'suspending their prior faculties' for some who had previously believed in evolution (CH2:INT4). In this way normative theology acts as a 'corrective mechanism' in human thought, such as in relation to the thermostat idea I mentioned in the previous chapter. Another described the 'heightened awareness and spiritual insight into nature as God's work and appreciation for it' when they came to know Jesus as their personal Saviour (CH1:INT8). After conversion, conservative evangelicals, as well as accepting Jesus as their personal saviour, have accepted God as the Creator, which now opened the gates for a real appreciation of creation and awareness of it being a provision of God, something which they see as missing for the unbeliever who has no normative theological anchor. This was summed up by John:

So to fully appreciate nature and creation you're missing a massive part of it in not recognising who has given it to you (John, aged 34, CH1:INT3).<sup>61</sup>

Recognising the earth as God's creation becomes a powerful theme for conservative evangelicals, remaining with them throughout their spiritual journey:

Once you have the light of realisation of the depths of His ability and outstanding qualities, that can't be turned off again, you will always want to appreciate those qualities displayed in creation (Gwyn, aged 41, CH4:INT7).

Again this points to a supernatural experience or enlightened state for the conservative evangelical which forever changes their operant theology in relation to creation. This led to a heightened sense of thankfulness for creation after conversion, with credit being given to God, whereas before everything was just taken for granted:

Before I did not acknowledge God for all that He did, did not give thanks to God, did not give Him any credit or praise for that, but when I became a Christian, that changed my perception, my understanding of creation. Why is it so beautiful? Because God is glorious and creation to a greater degree reflects His handiwork (Terry, aged 59, CH4:INT5).

Participant observation confirmed this with simple things such as prayers of thanks before eating as conservative evangelicals commonly only eat their meals after thanking God for His provision for

---

<sup>61</sup> For creation as a provision of God, see Gen 1:29, Psalm 65: 9-13.

them: a provision that comes through creation. This can be contrasted with how before conversion, people would just eat without passing a thought as to the origins of their meal. Here this operant theology has strong normative roots given in the biblical precedents of Jesus 'giving thanks' for food (Matthew 14:19-21) and the Apostle Paul (Acts 27:35) and in acknowledgement that human needs are a provision of God (Ephesians 5:20) and also as detailed in the Lord's Prayer.

Richard explained how things previously 'taken for granted' now took on real meaning after conversion and how this is epitomised in Christian hymnody:

Well the fact that God is involved with creation, the fact that it is so beautiful, is wonderful really. And now as a Christian I see things in a different light than I did originally. When I was brought up, basically the things around me I just accepted without any question. But once I was born again, things took on a different light. In fact one of the hymns says 'Earth around is richer green and the sky is richer blue', it describes the creation to a Christian who now has eyes to see these things that he never saw before (Richard, aged 83, CH4:INT6).

Here clear links are evidenced with respondents between their knowledge of a normative/espoused theology, as expressed in hymns, and their own operant theology. This is in relation to seeing a distinct difference between how those converted see creation differently to the unconverted. Normative theology informs operant theology and operant theology also 'checks out', confirms, or verifies the truths of normative theology for the believer. Rhian also mentioned the same hymn to emphasise this difference in how a believer or converted Christian would see creation compared to an unbeliever:

Creation means much more to me than it would to a non-Christian because I can see that it is God's work, as I am told in the Bible it is God's handiwork and as the hymn says 'Heaven above is softer blue, earth around is sweeter green, something lives in every hue, Christ-less eyes have never seen'.<sup>62</sup> He has a plan and a purpose when He created the world and when He created men and women to inhabit the earth (Rhian, aged 68, CH4:INT8).

Both knowledge of the Bible and hymns lend themselves to the interviewees' espoused theology which results in an elevated position being developed for the conservative evangelical who it is claimed has a deeper understanding of creation in contrast to people who are not Christian. Here creation, including awareness and appreciation of it, is tied in with ideas of salvation as 'God's

---

<sup>62</sup> The Hymn mentioned here by Rhian and earlier by Richard, has the title or first lines 'Loved with Everlasting Love' or may be more commonly known by the last lines of each verse 'I am His and He is mine'. This hymn was sung on one occasion during fieldwork and can be found in *Christian Hymns* (2007, #689).

purpose in the world'. The belief is that people should have a wonder and amazement at the beauty of creation which can act as a stepping stone in coming to faith as they are then without excuse (CH1:INT3, CH4:INT8). Kay explained the down side of this for unbelievers more bluntly:

The flowers I picked yesterday are so beautiful: it's a miracle when you think about it. Creation has been given us to enjoy by God, beautiful trees, beautiful countryside and lakes, and you go to Romans 1 and it says 'their futile minds are darkened because they do not acknowledge the Creator, they worship the creature instead of the Creator' (Kay, aged 65, CH3:INT3).

Here, enjoyment of creation by the converted is tied in with their salvation and there is therefore 'a darkness' involved in enjoying creation without this being attached to an appreciation and awareness of the creator, as the conservative evangelical understanding is that this ultimately leads to eternal separation from God. This again is strongly related to normative theology, specifically Romans 1:20, which conservative evangelicals apply to their understanding of the fate of those who do not respond to the physical evidence of God as creator with a belief in Him, as figured in pastoral teaching (CH2:SERM1, CH4:SERM3, CH4:SERM10) and historic creeds (Chapter 6:3, Baptist Confession of Faith). Conservative evangelicals, when casting their eyes to the attitudes of broader society, evaluate them from their own normative theological understanding as this fuses with their own operant theology and their experience and observation of others.

Perhaps the multiple reasons why conservative evangelicals couple ideas of God in some way with their appreciation of creation leads to a belief that only genuine believers can truly understand the beauty of creation (CH2:INT5) and that 'enjoyment of creation' is different for converted Christians: that without God as the creator, the sense of enjoyment cannot be the same, that you have to be 'in Christ' to realise and enjoy the depths of what creation means as part of God's plan (CH2:INT10). Enjoyment of creation came from a sense that creation by God is far beyond the creation of humans: enjoying creation for the evangelical is enjoying the depths of God's creative power through the environment (CH1:INT8). With the data presented so far in this chapter, I have shown how in numerous ways conversion has a central importance for conservative evangelicals in relation to creation. I will now discuss major themes in more detail about how conservative evangelicals experience creation more generally after their conversion.

Conservative evangelicals, speaking more generally about their appreciation of creation, and not just in relation to their conversion, focus upon a number of overlapping themes. The most common is seeing the beauty and complexity of creation (29 interviewees); then enjoying creation such as with specific places and parts of nature (19 interviewees); being thankful for creation (10 interviewees) and having a desire to praise the Creator for creation (16 interviewees). Again these themes are expressed in a rich and vibrant operant theology, with each of the four themes having clear relationships to normative/espoused theologies. Seeing the beauty of the environment was the single strongest theme that emerged from interview data. Appreciation of creation can clearly be seen in how conservative evangelicals hold special memories of visiting certain places in the world, or had a special interest in or favourite part of creation.

Interviewees heralded special memories of vacations or work placements in certain places of great natural beauty; such as New Zealand; Iona in Scotland; the Llŷn Peninsula in North Wales; the Yorkshire Dales or Pembrokeshire; the Fjords of Norway; the Isles of Scilly; the Island of Sark, Derbyshire and the Peak District; the Swedish Arctic Circle and Israel (CH1:INT2, CH2:INT4, CH2:INT9, CH1:INT8, CH4:INT6, CH4:INT4, CH3:INT4, CH3:INT6). This could be seen in terms of memories of operant theology, or theology embedded within reflections upon things that have been done rather than specifically what is presently being done. This perhaps feeds back into the four voice model of analysis in as much as operant theology needs to incorporate different tenses such as past, present and future. All respondents who mentioned North Wales and the areas they lived in spoke in positive terms with regards to the opportunities they had to enjoy a diverse creation. This appreciation was more evidently seen in specific aspects of creation in addition to particular geographical places.

Many congregants during interviews expressed feelings toward certain parts of God's creation, such as it being their favourite or having some special meaning to them. Numerically the most frequent was birds with nine respondents mentioning them (CH2:INT6, CH1:INT1, CH4:INT9), in second place the sea which seven respondents mentioned (CH1:INT6, CH4:INT4, CH4:INT8), followed by the mountains which six respondents mentioned (CH1:INT3, CH4:INT5). This was followed by four respondents mentioning the stars (CH4:INT10, CH1:INT8), and three the sunset (CH4:INT2). Individuals mentioned other things such as; spiders, the snow, rivers, a rainbow, frost, flowers, grasses, caves, bees or ants. Several also mentioned animals more generally. Human-made things such as canals (CH3:INT8) and parkland (CH1:INT2) were also mentioned. Many of these came up in respondents' appreciation of creation such as its beauty, it therefore having a special place in their

heart and memory. It was also commonly mentioned as evidence for a creator and that such things did not just happen to be around by chance (CH1:INT2). Although respondents articulated this appreciation of the beauty of creation without clear reference to normative influences, occasional teaching from the pulpit did mention this (CH2:SERM1, CH4:SERM10, CH3:SERM12) although the freedom of expression offered in the interview encounter seemed to allow people the opportunity to express this more deeply than in a corporate setting. In addition, although references to parts of creation are mentioned as a very personal and precise operant theology and experience, it should also be noted that biblical precedents are evident with reference to parts of the natural world featuring regularly in Scripture. Luke quoted Scripture from Psalm 19 and Romans 1 to explain how he thought as Christians we should recognise God's qualities displayed in creation, showing how normative/espoused understanding feeds directly into operant conduct and observation, as he later informed me of his interest in ornithology and the RSPB:

'The heavens declare God's glory and that His invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen'. I do think as Christian people, we of all people should keep our eyes open and try and appreciate something of the power and the wisdom and the majesty that God has displayed in the created world (Luke, aged 47, CH2:INT6).

Formal theology reiterates this point of God's power and strength manifested in creation (Ferguson, 1987, p.26-27) and notes normative Scripture that teaches the same (Isaiah 40:26,28). Another described how 'every flower and blade of grass is a miracle of God all signed by the Maker' (CH1:INT1). Appreciation of parts of creation was also fleshed out in respondents' hobbies: gardening was the most common (CH1:INT4, CH4:INT2, CH4:INT8, CH3:INT3), followed by walking or hiking in creation (CH3:INT10, CH2:INT4, CH4:INT5, CH3:INT3), holidays such as camping (CH1:INT8, CH4:INT10), swimming in the sea (CH2:INT1), keeping pets (CH4:INT4, CH3:INT8), climbing (CH1:INT3), bike riding (CH3:INT4), hunting or fishing (CH3:INT10), beekeeping and farming (CH1:INT4, CH4:INT3) or growing vegetables for home consumption (CH3:INT3) and even flying (CH3:INT4). Gardening seemed to be particularly important to conservative evangelicals and it was deemed important to maintain in good order what they had been given by God. From attending numerous people's homes, participant observation also showed that this was the case. Although some showed more interest than others, or had a greater love for gardening as a hobby, those who saw it as a chore still saw the importance of maintaining order. Some even expressed irritation at seeing overgrown or neglected gardens and the weeds taking over in other people's homes in their locality (CH4:INT2, CH3:INT10). This was seen as a misuse of God's creation or a failure to care for it, keep it in good order, and enjoy what has been provided. Again this provides a further example of

how conservative evangelicals normative theological understanding of how things should be with operant theology, can lead them to make judgements on the lifestyles of others, both believers and unbelievers, whose action or operant theology does not match their own normative theological understanding closely enough. The example of gardening or caring for that bit of creation that you have been allotted is linked to normative understandings of dominion and stewardship and how human influences can be detrimental to the environment.

For some interviewees human appreciation of the beauty of creation was tied with human responsibility for it (CH2:INT9) or contrasted with human destruction of it (CH4:INT2): an idea that we live in a beautiful world but humans have been foolish and neglectful (CH3:INT2).<sup>63</sup> This was expressed by Bill:

The world itself it is really beautiful the way He has made all things and we have defiled it really, the inhabitants of the earth have defiled His creation [...] it makes me feel sad because the world is a beautiful place really (Bill, aged 72, CH4:INT1).

Sadness expressed at seeing detrimental human impacts upon creation was also expressed by Maureen; when humans do not respect what God has given them and fail with creation's maintenance and upkeep:

There are beautiful places all over the world. It is mankind that is destroying and making places ugly. God's working in nature is perfect. The only imperfection comes when man starts interfering [...] it saddens me that they don't have respect (Maureen, aged 65, CH4:INT2).

That humans were a destructive agent that interfered with the beauty of creation was expressed by a total of nine interviewees such as (CH3:INT2 and CH3:INT4). In the examples of Bill and Maureen a powerful emotional response is evidenced in their operant theology, yet this is not so much coming from a normative church teaching (as no sermons covered this theme and none of the churches had declarations or statements about stewardship), but rather either a personal witnessing of, or

---

<sup>63</sup> The theme here that humans have a responsibility to be stewards of creation can be deduced from Scriptures such as Gen 1: 26-31, Gen 2: 15-17 and Psalm 8. I would also add more detail in that stewards are caretakers of a creation that God owns (Psalm 24:1, 50:10-12, 1 Cor:10:26) and that the diversity of creation reflects God's power and wisdom (Neh: 9:6, Psalm 104:24). These offer further reasons to wisely steward creation and maintain its diversity. Furthermore, the fact that humans bear God's image, more visibly seen in born again Christians, and that God himself delights in and cares for His creation (Job 38:26-27, Psalm 104:10-14, Mat 6:26) point to stewardship responsibilities with clear normative theological roots. Exercising stewardship can therefore aid human and non-human flourishing and glorify the Creator. However, I am aware many interviewees would not have thought about dominion in such a detailed manner.

reflection upon, the degradation of creation. Again this reiterates the earlier point in relation to conversion and creation: that operant theology can act somewhat independently of the more commonly hierarchical structure of the four voices. More precisely that operant theology can be stimulated by personal experience as personal observation and reflection upon the degradation of creation elicits an emotional operant response. In relation to interviewees from ethnic minorities, this will be discussed further in Chapter 7. However, although I have claimed that operant theology can be informed by personal experience, this may also have links to their own latent understanding of Scripture in relation to dominion and creation, in addition to being a possible expression of their personal sanctification or holiness, which has resulted from their conversion outlined earlier. If so, then normative theology would still be playing its part within a bilateral relationship with experience: both informing operant theology. In effect, what is deemed to be the observance of an incorrect operant theology evidenced within broader society, seeing a failure to adequately care for creation, perhaps resonates with the knowledge or understanding of a specific normative stance with regards to what stewardship is, which then informs the interviewees' espoused and operant stance. To authenticate the exact level of influences in such instances would be something of an impossible task. However it seems that experience-normative-operant relationships are evident. This example, as others, also raises the question of where 'feelings' situate themselves within the four voices of theology. If espoused is what people say they do and operant is what they do, then to what extent do people have an espoused and operant theology as a direct result of normative teaching or rather articulating an emotional sense into operant action? Then added to this complexity is the way in which normative or non-normative sources elicit such 'feelings'.

For some, acknowledgement of the intense beauty of creation fused with supernatural encounters with God (CH2:INT4, CH4:INT3). Creation was seen as 'so vivid and beautiful', such as with the blending of colours with flowers, they 'could barely take it in' (CH4:INT3). Acknowledgement of an 'absolutely wonderful creation' kept God firmly in mind, and that human attempts at creating are far inferior in terms of beauty (CH1:INT5). Beauty was seen in 'how things are perfectly put together' to work in harmony, such as sea birds having natural waterproofing oils in their feathers enabling them to comfortably live in aquatic environments (CH1:INT2). Appreciation of the beauty of creation was closely tied to a love of creation (CH4:INT5). Hymns such as 'How Great Thou Art'<sup>64</sup> were mentioned as echoes of their appreciation of nature and the praise of the Creator that should result (CH1:INT1). Here, normative and espoused church teaching in the form of hymns, is practised as a corporate operant theology during church services, yet lyrics are

---

<sup>64</sup> The hymn 'How Great Thou Art' was sung on three occasions during fieldwork, once in CH2 and twice in CH3 and is renowned for eliciting awe and wonder at Creation and a desire to praise the Creator.



remembered at later times by respondents, in this instance as they visibly witness and reflect upon God's creation, which takes worship out of the church building and into other outdoor environments. Lyrics of hymns therefore have a permanence that can be called to mind from memory to articulate an experience or operant theology. The lyrics to the hymn 'All things Bright and Beautiful'<sup>65</sup> were seen by one respondent as important enough to include in things to be given to her children upon her passing away (CH4:INT3). Others dwelling upon the beauty of creation fixed their eyes into the future and how a more real and far greater beauty will come when God 'makes all things new': the eschatological hope of an even more beautiful world (CH4:INT9). I noted how the same position has been reiterated within formal theology (Lewis, 1998b, pp.24-25). Here is a forerunner of how specific normative doctrines, such as eschatology, very precisely influence an espoused vision and an operant hope, and will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

That creation is to be enjoyed, as a gift of God, was a predominant theme in interviews. This theme was drawn back to the Genesis creation account: that everything was created 'good' by God, also reiterated in creeds (Chapter 4:1, Baptist Confession of Faith). Here the four voices of theology link being since creation is declared as good (normative theology) and humans therefore should enjoy creation (operant theology). The rhythm of the seasons, such as the explosion of beauty and growth during spring, acted as a great encouragement in life (CH4:INT8, CH3:INT4). In this sense just as God's Word encourages and offers hope to conservative evangelicals, so can creation. This brings up an interesting area of discussion as to where exactly God's physical creation would be placed within the 'four voices model of theology'. If it is something that can be seen (read) and understood, like a book, could it in fact be a part of normative theology itself? As was discussed earlier in Chapter 4, conservative evangelicals see the Bible as God's 'special revelation' as opposed to creation which is seen as God's 'general revelation'. If this was the case it would open up the possibility for creation itself to be a normative theology that influences operant theology: being one part of God's two-fold revelation.

Some mentioned specific places in creation such as mountains and the importance of this, simply 'as place to live, relax, enjoy and be a part of' (CH2:INT2). Here the simplicity of personal involvement and awareness of creation gives a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment. With others this came from a simple act of walking amongst creation (CH1:INT5, CH1:INT8) or stemmed from just being in areas rich in flora and fauna, even in zoo environments (CH1:INT1). Some believed that God had gifted them with a 'greater appreciation and enjoyment than your average person' again pointing to the importance of a person's faith in how they enjoy creation (CH1:INT4). Specifically six

---

<sup>65</sup> The hymn 'All things Bright and Beautiful' was not sung during church placements.

interviewees saw creation as an arena for God to educate humans; firstly into God's personal qualities at being able to create (CH3:INT10, CH1:INT1, CH4:INT3) and secondly with such things as maternal instincts and work ethic evident within creation (CH4:INT1, CH4:INT4). Although not mentioned by the interviewees themselves, these examples have clear parallels in formal theology with such publications as Stott's (2004) *The Birds Our Teachers* and Spurgeon's (1997 [1882]) *Farm Sermons*.

As well as being awe-struck by the beauty of creation, conservative evangelicals also marvel at the variety (11 interviewees) and complexity (12 interviewees) that is displayed in the created order. Some respondents were really overwhelmed when thinking of the complexity and variety of creation as expressed by Edward:

When I think of the myriads, all the species of tiny spiders, and you think of every leaf on a tree that is so purposefully and beautifully made, the vastness of His creation and intimacy of it [...] the farthest star to the intricacy of tiny molecules and atoms. He knows all about it, invented it, made it, the whole thing our life depends upon [...] it is mind boggling because we are so finite and He is so infinite [...] we talk of humans multi-tasking but He takes care of the farthest star and the smallest microbe and He is conscious of the whole of creation, that is something ah- I just have to stand back (Edward, aged 77, CH2:INT7).<sup>66</sup>

Being awe-struck by a complex and vast creation was also expressed by Barry:

Its complexity, diversity and magnificence leave me in awe, it speaks to me of a purpose and not of a chance, there's too much complexity in the world to have just happened [...] You wake up and see the sunrise, you see the sunset, you see the stars, the planets are millions of miles away and the earth is just one little blob in amongst the universe or universes and galaxies, and yet God created it all. How great must God be and how small is our understanding of Him? (Barry, aged 50, CH1:INT6).

In terms of formal theology these examples bear testimony to what has been termed as a 'biblical cosmology' (Carson, 1978, p.96) of God's creative design and continued sustenance of creation. In addition, formal theologians reiterate how creation should leave the believer awestruck (Piper, 1998, p.94). The two quotations also speak of a profound operant theology although this is often expressed in terms of thought and meditation upon creation. This has clear links to normative theology, although in this as in other instances, interviewees do not always acknowledge this link

---

<sup>66</sup> For Scripture denoting the depths of God's creative power displayed in creation, see Jeremiah 32:17. For God sustaining the whole of creation, see Colossians 1:17 and Hebrews 1:3.

themselves, such as in Scripture. Yet as with the example of 'feelings' earlier, here 'thoughts' raises questions as to whether or not the four voices theory is adequate to incorporate them in a highly defined manner. This may be an area where the four voices theory lacks a more detailed way of incorporating human experience.

This 'marvelling' at God and His capacities seen through creation were also seen in relation to human creation as many evangelicals (16 interviewees) when asked about creation answered in part about human creation. In this respect, humans are seen as part of creation and significant. For instance, the responsibility of parents bringing a new life into the world was seen as more important than 'building empires and castles' and that birth is very much a work of creation (CH2:INT7). 'The two seeds coming together to create a new human life that has got all those things, like a mind' was seen as incredible (CH1:INT5). That seeing a new baby being born 'is one of the most miraculous things you could ever see' (CH4:INT2). Having a baby was described as a wonderful miracle, that God ordains as He perfectly forms us in the womb (CH3:INT3). Other interviewees marvelled at human creation in terms of the intricacies of the human body in general (CH1:INT5) or specifically something like an eye (CH3:INT3); the way the limbs upon a body grow in perfect unison (CH2:INT1); its healing capacity (CH4:INT7, CH3:INT6); or human abilities like being able to hold and use things with our hands (CH1:INT1). In reflection upon this I would suggest this operant theology in relation to human creation is not influenced by the normative theology of humans being seen as different and above creation (as all the examples given would be equally true with other aspects of non-human creation) but is related to normative theology in what Scripture teaches about human creation being a work of God. For instance, Psalm 139: 13-14 says 'for you formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are your works'. This is corroborated with church teaching (CH2:SERM2). In this instance it is about the qualities of God and human beings as a creation of God, rather than human creation as superior to non-human creation, such as bearing God's image, as shall be discussed in Chapter 6.

Appreciation of the beauty of creation was strongly linked to being the precursor of praise of the Creator and thankfulness for His good creation supplying human needs (CH2:INT5). In this way, enjoying the beauty of creation was much wider than just personal pleasure, but pointed to God, His wisdom and capacity to create such beauty (CH3:INT10) and therefore what the proper response should be to the Creator because of this.

Some expressed enjoyment as the first theme in human valuation of non-human creation: but again that enjoyment of creation is not just a pleasurable physical feeling but linked to God's glory, His worship, and the very spiritual identity of conservative evangelicals, as expressed by John:

For me God's creation is for us to enjoy and for His glory as well. He said it was good, and for God to say something is good is quite a statement, it must please Him for Him to say it is good, it brings Him glory, it brings Him attention, praise and worship [...] that is what creation is for, we are at our best when we are worshipping Him, when we see His beauty and we enjoy His majesty and His creation, we are enjoying Him as much as we can (John, aged 34, CH1:INT3).

John makes the connection between his understanding of normative teaching, that 'God said it was good' and the response that this should elicit in the believers operant theology, in terms of bringing glory to God, being praised and worshipped. Formal theology also denoted how God should be praised and worshipped as the Creator as His greatness is displayed in the world rather than the idolatry performed by people outside the Christian faith (Ferguson, 1987, p.24-25).

Acknowledging the way evangelicals enjoy creation and appreciate its beauty, diversity and complexity, it is not surprising that thankfulness for creation emerged as a strong theme in interviews. This was also noted as a theme in corporate prayer during church services, quite strongly in one church in particular (CH2). Here, corporate operant theology as shaped in prayer is then expressed as an individual operant theology. Yet perhaps with the prayer coming from a church leader, it could be seen as a form of normative teaching or influence, just as a sermon. Some out of their humility recognised they did not give God as much recognition as they ought to (CH1:INT1, CH4:INT10, CH3:INT10). Thankfulness was seen in terms of God's provision with foods and that in thanking Him it keeps Him in our focus (CH1:INT3, CH1:INT6). Although individual normative lines of influence can be traced back for an operant theology that thanks and praises the Creator for creation, it is also evidenced how the operant theology of experiencing the beauty and magnificence of creation may directly lead to further operant theology as a proclamation of praise. It is therefore interesting to note that operant theology can result from previous operant or experienced theology rather than just resulting each time from a normative-espoused-operant hierarchy. In addition to thankfulness a common theme was praise as expressed by Mark:

It's one of the things that if I allow myself, I can most readily respond in praise to God you know when I see a beautiful sunrise or when I see the beauty of creation or when I see beautiful gardens or when I see the flowers (Mark, aged 38, CH3:INT10).

Praising God is a central theme in conservative evangelical practice and religious experience and part of this is in relation to creation: the purpose of God creating was for His praise and glory, 'for His own pleasure' (CH4:INT5) and that one of the purposes for humans is to worship and praise Him for all creation, to give Him thanks' (CH3:INT5) and this is articulated in church teaching (CH1:SERM10, CH2:SERM2) and formal theology (Berkhof, 1966, p.136).<sup>67</sup> Again this puts God clearly central, when thinking about creation, on the pedestal which conservative evangelicals see him as deserving as the Creator: that all creation—human and non-human—are to praise God.<sup>68</sup> For some this was something that just welled up inside: 'You can't help but just praise the Lord' at the sight of 'a beautiful sunset, quite wonderful' (Deirdre, aged 66, CH1:INT8). Others explained with more unusual words:

Quiddity—one of my youth leaders taught me this word. Basically I think it is a word that describes the realness of things [...] God made the world so beautiful, I think it should create in us a feeling of praise for Him (Michael, aged 18, CH2:INT5).

The link is made between an all-powerful God, creating a world with many wonderful attributes and therefore praise being due to the Creator. This theme as a motivator to praise God was also expressed in comparing the largest galaxies right down to the smallest things in creation as they all showed His handiwork (CH4:INT10).

In this section on creation and praising God, the clear linear and hierarchical structure of the four voices of analysis is exhibited with normative followed by espoused followed by operant theology. Although not frequently preached in detail from the pulpit, and interviewees do not often draw upon relevant Scriptures when articulating themselves, I believe teachings in the Bible are in-line with their positions. That nothing expressed contradicts Scripture perhaps points to how their operant theology is permeated with normative theology and biblical authority. If this was not the case then some respondents would express heretical opinions, however this did not happen. As conservative evangelicals normatively understand their God as a powerful creator of a wonderful creation, their personal observation and verification of this leads to an operant theology which

---

<sup>67</sup> For Scriptures referring to praise and thanksgiving for creation, see Psalm 104: 1-35, Psalm 145: 5-10 and Psalm 148.

<sup>68</sup> The belief that all creation is to praise God can be gained from Scriptures such as 1 Chronicles 16: 30-34 and numerous Psalms.

praises the Creator. Yet as stressed earlier the one possible anomaly is that operant theology can be the precursor to further operant theology, rather than operant theology being dependent at every turn upon a new normative stimulus. This could be seen in terms of being guided by the Holy Spirit, as scriptural verification would still point to how such operant theology has not gone astray. Furthermore, given a creation that offers spiritual and physical health benefits, not surprisingly conservative evangelicals prefer to spend time in such environments.

#### 5:5 CREATION AS THERAPEUTIC AND PREFERENCES FOR RURAL OVER URBAN AREAS

---

Interviewees have vividly described some of the personal benefits they have noticed, both physical and spiritual, from being immersed in creation, and it is therefore not surprising they prefer rural rather than urban or human-made environments. Some described how creation ‘gave them a sense of peace as a place to stop and be still’ compared to the town or city ‘associated with the business of life’ and therefore led to better psychological health (CH2:INT4). That activities such as ‘being in the garden, hearing the birds, being next to nature, just makes you feel better, it’s therapeutic’ (CH1:INT2). Being in the mountains seemed to take away stress and personal problems became less significant as the height of the mountains gave a different perspective (CH4:INT5). Another, while camping in the mountains ‘felt a cleanness and level of relaxation and exhilaration’ that did not come in more ordinary day-to-day activities (CH4:INT10). For another, the varied environment of North Wales provided a major theme in her joy of life and spiritual health in contrast to the constraining effect of a city (CH2:INT9). Creation took people out of the business of life, the moving around, work and shopping associated with human-made environments, whereas the mountains or the sea provided an arena to stop and be still and gain a symmetry with God (CH2:INT4). Another saw health benefits of his pleasant garden scenery in Snowdonia as ‘difficult to define exactly why’, but having a ‘recharging effect’ and therefore therapeutic (CH1:INT4). One interviewee working with the elderly and disabled saw the health benefits for her clients in taking them out for walks, to the zoo, the duck pond and even what had become known as ‘therapeutic dog patting’ whereby pets were taken to care homes for this purpose (CH4:INT4).

For conservative evangelicals, differing environments can influence their own spiritual health and wellbeing. More precisely, areas more explicitly ‘God’s creation’, being less influenced by humanity, have positive human benefits. This is very much a theology of experience rich with people’s own feelings in large part independent of normative theology, though again not going against it as would be the case with something like pantheism. But rather it is a much richer and

more diverse operant theology than is found in official church teaching, whether the Bible, church declarations, sermons or hymns. It is a focus that has not been previously formalised into a normative position, and evidences the way freedom does exist in some respects for conservative evangelicals to express themselves with their operant theology, perhaps more from their innate nature and yearning of the heart rather than more dogmatic teachings. However, as shall be seen below, there are biblical precedents of human endeavours to be in similar more remote and solitary places.

The importance of being involved with creation such as animals and the health benefits that ensue was most vividly expressed by a respondent who had experience working with recovering drug addicts in Holland, who as part of their rehabilitation were encouraged to care for animals on a farming project (CH4:INT5). Here, addiction was explained in terms of 'God's creation falling away from God, having no relationship with him, and searching for other ways to fulfil themselves' (CH4:INT5):

RESP: I worked with drug addicts in Andover, I worked with hardened people. We had hencoops there and goats, and their relationship with the animals changed them, they became softer when they became involved with animals. These people were brought up in cities on drugs and alcohol, quite notorious in some ways, yet when you put them with animals, working alongside them, they cared for them, you saw a soft side to them.

CC: Like it was therapeutic to them?

RESP: Yes absolutely, so you can see there even with those people, there is a need there, crying out really for something that is beautiful, which has been missed in life because of sin [...] being alongside animals who rely upon them to be fed. You know in a sense they become really, it's like it says in Genesis where God gives man authority over creation, they have the power to feed or not to feed these animals. But many took their responsibility seriously in caring for these animals (Terry, aged 59, CH4:INT5).

Here, the interviewee's work experience reveals how when as human beings we do not exercise our dominion over animals literally and meaningfully, when we are not involved in some way to care for them or experience creation, then the result can be ill health. For people who have missed this responsibility in their lives, when bringing them back to this God given task it can result in their own psychological health and opening up of their sensitivity. Needless to say the environment then also benefits. In terms of the 'four voices of theology', in following clearly a normative theology in terms of dominion and stewardship (Genesis 1:27-28), and making this a real and tangible operant

theology in human life, it can have healing and therapeutic effects upon humans as well as creation. Therefore a more tangible and clearly expressed normative theology of dominion which would engage people at the operant level more officially could have positive impacts. In this respect the four voices theory and its hierarchical nature offers a potential avenue of hope. With conservative evangelicals appreciating the beauty of creation and feeling the benefit of being surrounded by creation, it follows that they would express a preference for rural rather than urban environments.

During interviews 17 respondents expressed opinions along issues of preferences to live in rural rather than urban areas. Results showed that evangelicals greatly preferred living in the countryside or regularly visiting it. I do not think this is purely down to the sampling of churches as all four churches were in towns and respondents had very mixed backgrounds as to where they had previously lived. A common theme was expressed by Emily:

I like nature, I like being outside, the fresh air and the grass and the trees, I love it all, I definitely like living in the countryside. I have lived in cities and not really enjoyed it: I much prefer to have the big open space. I find it easier to be calm and in some way close to God in creation and nature (Emily, aged 27, CH3:INT9).

The open space provided by creation, from the fresh air to the trees, results in a freedom from stress and an ability to draw closer to God. An enjoyment and need to spend time in God's creation was expressed in such things as choosing where to work and live (CH3:INT4, CH3:INT7). One respondent's choice to live in North Wales rather than the Home Counties of England where she grew up was described in biblical terms as the Psalmist's desire 'to be in the hills' (CH2:INT9). Here this respondent articulates her operant theology or the fulfilment of her desired lifestyle with the reassurance of a normative precedent or underpinning. However, I would suggest this is used to back up her preference rather than informing it.

In these respects urban areas 'constrained' spiritual health whereas rural areas 'released' and preserved it. Another respondent, having studied in inner-city Liverpool, yearned for the refreshment of his native North Wales and particularly the coastal areas of Anglesey which led to feelings of peace, appreciation of the beauty of creation and to glorify the Creator (CH2:INT4). Another reflected upon holidays in isolated areas of North Wales and Scotland and how in sparsely populated areas 'you see God's creation at its best' having been less influenced by humanity, compared to cities 'where people can't even look at the skies and see the stars' (CH1:INT5). Another expressed the view of how the country threw up surprises that just do not materialise in more urban areas, such as tiny mosses and flowers growing on a rock face, or the wild flowers on a forest floor, which led to a sense of awe and feelings of reverence and prayerfulness (CH1:INT8). In these



instances again a very rich operant theology is noticed, one that is deeply informed or perpetuated by experience as interviewees bring to mind memories of the personal and health benefits of being amidst God's creation. A walk in a pleasant rural environment was also used as a literal way to 'talk with God':

I have always enjoyed walking on my own and I talk to God on my walks, sometimes out loud if there is nobody around and the two seem to fit quite comfortably together. So I suppose it is taking away everything man-made when you are surrounded just by what God has created: maybe that helps you channel or focus (Eden, aged 46, CH3:INT6).

In this sense, God's created environment is not just a 'preference' due to personal taste or it being ascetically and aesthetically pleasing: it is also linked to worship and the respondents' spiritual life. A pristine environment allowed this respondent to communicate better with God as she went on to point out that she 'did not associate God with concrete, bins, highways, smoke and traffic' (CH3:INT6). Another went on to explain that with her new understanding of creation after conversion, she could readily pray to God more easily whilst outside in His creation, where she could see for instance how He had painted His flowers (CH4:INT3). Here personal operant theology bears testimony to creation being a link to God which can aid in prayer and spiritual connection with the creator. Again although not mentioned by interviewees, this also could be seen as having a biblical precedent or a normative theological root with such examples as David in Psalm 23:1-3, John the Baptist in John 1:23 and Jesus in Mark 1:35 and Luke 6:12-13, amongst other texts that conservative evangelicals would be familiar with. Historic formal theology also teaches that God communicates through His creation (Edwards, 2000 [17-- ], p.76).

Deidre also saw the environment as a place to 'draw near to the Lord' and explicitly stated how she found God in His creation:

I never cease to find God whenever we are out walking, or in the garden I feel Him, I feel Him with the weather: whether it is stormy standing on the promenade, looking at the huge angry sea, or a day like today when it is calm, I have a great appreciation of that (Deidre, aged 66, CH1:INT8).

Others who had to work in large cities like London for periods of time took solace in local parks during the week and escaped to the countryside when given the opportunity at the weekend (CH1:INT2). Some felt blessed at being brought up in rural environments and that this was something that had stayed with them into adulthood or that their parents' interest in things such as bird life, flowers or trees had in some way encouraged their own appreciation of these things (CH1:

INT1, CH2:INT6). This points to how 'others' can influence interviewees attitudes toward creation rather than official normative teachings. However, the likelihood of this being within the context of a Christian home or upbringing means that such influences have greater potential to be in-line with normative positions. This appreciation and respect for rural areas led to some respondents being against proposed developments (CH4:INT3). Some plainly stated how they do not like cities or towns but just loved to be in the countryside (CH4:INT5). This was vividly described by Barry:

I enjoy the sea, the beach, the mountain, the river: just being in the natural world. I think if you walk around a city with its concreteness and its tarmac and its glass and its fumes and its factories, then go out and walk on a mountain, it's a different feeling. It is sort of 'one with nature' if I can put it that way: we are here to enjoy the world (Barry, aged 50, CH1:INT6).

This enjoyment led to a sense of the divine in the natural environment which did not occur within human-made areas and that God is far greater than anything humans can do with regards to creating (CH1:INT6) and that the countryside has a 'realness' about it whereas the city is 'synthetic' (CH3:INT4). For others a basic human need was to enjoy creation and that can be missing in people's lives:

We need to see beauty I believe as human beings and we can be starved of it and don't know what we are missing, unless they get out there and see the lovely things of creation. It's in us all, a need to see it and enjoy it [...] some people brought up in towns and cities, children have never even seen something such as cows in a field (Emma, aged 60, CH4:INT4).

Modern industrial society, urban lifestyles and the pace of life with globalisation and modernity were all seen as in some way removing humans from a basic need such as the literal healing benefits of enjoying and being amongst creation (CH4:INT5, CH4:INT10). In terms of the four voices of theology that operate for the believer, such a suggestion could be seen as people being too far removed from a missing link to God (creation) and perhaps feeds back to the point made earlier about Romans 1:20, with God's witness through creation being diluted.

Not a single interviewee expressed a preference for city living or desire to spend long periods of time in urban areas.<sup>69</sup> This would in no doubt be in stark contrast to a general sample of the population at large as we hear of people 'loving the buzz and energy of the city' with all the facilities, such as nightlife, shopping and employment opportunities that it has to offer. There was also no difference expressed between younger or older interviewees on this issue. With rural and

---

<sup>69</sup>However, I am aware that urban environments would be seen by conservative evangelicals as an important place for evangelism.

urban environments, conservative evangelical Christians have a greater desire and appreciation of the former and it is something closely linked to their faith.

## 5:6 CONCLUSION

---

Conservative evangelicals start their story of what creation means to them with a positively rich and diverse operant theology based on numerous experiential and theological elements that lead to a great appreciation of the environment. Overarching themes include the experience and effects of conversion; a focus upon the beauty of creation; an enjoyment of creation; a sense of wonder at the diversity and complexity of creation and powers displayed by the Creator; an understanding and belief in creation's therapeutic and health benefits; and more broadly a heart-felt thankfulness for creation that leads to a sense of awe for, and praise of, the Creator. In light of the four voices model of theological reflection two areas have been addressed in this chapter and now will be drawn together in the conclusion. Firstly, how the four voices template aids in understanding what is happening with the data presented and secondly how this possibly changes understanding of the model itself, in feeding back to the four voices setup.

It can be seen that interviewees in this study have a deep appreciation for the created world and central to this is their conversion to the conservative evangelical faith: as discussed by around half of interviewees. Here, being 'born again' (clearly linked to a normative teaching) results in an operant theology that is however largely independent of a normative root. For instance 'seeing creation with new eyes' as respondents describe how their sensory perceptions of creation are heightened, leading to a deeper appreciation and understanding of creation and a new heart after their conversion, the ramifications of which for dominion shall be seen in more detail in Chapter 6. This experience of conversion leads people to experience creation's beauty more deeply, to recognise the wisdom displayed by the Maker, and to be thankful for creation.

The need for conversion and the process and fruits of conversion more broadly, are very much a central normative teaching. However, normative theology does not specifically teach the link between conversion and its effects upon attitudes to creation. Normative theology therefore acts as an initial catalyst which then becomes self-perpetuating through experience and a rich operant theology. An experiential operant theology allows connections to be made and observed between conversion and changed attitudes toward creation. These connections can be independent from normative teaching but do not contradict it in any way. A diverse operant theology is initially

propelled by a normative starting point but is then further energised by experience and operant theology. For instance, operant theology of enjoying creation leads to operant theology of praising God for creation. Yet in God creating for His own pleasure and His praise, I would suggest there is something of a synergy taking place under the auspices of the Holy Spirit. In this sense conversion and creation for conservative evangelicals is not so much expressing and articulating words and teachings in Scripture, but expressing a profound personal experience.

Conservative evangelicals see themselves as obtaining an enlightened spiritual state after conversion which forever changes their operant theology in relation to creation. However, in looking back on their experience, conservative evangelicals can express this in terms of an espoused theology to others, therefore having a potential influence. In light of this an interesting question is if the operant voice can swim up-stream as it were and impact the four voice hierarchy from the bottom up. In addition, for conversion and creation normative theology influences operant theology from the inside-out rather than the outside-in: highlighting one of the two very distinct ways that operant theology can result from normative teachings. In this way normative theology results in operant theology, conversion is not like incorporating a specific doctrine from the outside-in, such as shall be seen in Chapter 6.

Other normative influences with regards to creation include biblical teachings and church tradition, such as in giving thanks for food provided through creation. In addition the normative and espoused theology expressed in hymns which articulate the beauty of creation and Christian worship of God for creation. The positive themes of appreciating creation presented in this chapter although in one sense may be seen to well up inside them as they experience creation: an operant theology which it seems is evidenced by a 'heart that sings'. However at numerous points they are also rooted in normative theology from Scripture and hymns. In the instance with hymns it was evident that this normative and espoused church teaching was remembered after corporate worship and then is brought back to mind during their operant theology and experience. A further interesting observation is how normative theology influences operant theology and yet operant theology or experience can check out and verify normative theology. Some quote Scripture alongside their operant theology, showing the influence of normative and espoused theology upon operant theology but also how for the believer there can be something of a fusion between these voices. For some, normative teachings such as creation being declared good, lead to a connection being made to a more specific operant theological response, such as a reason to enjoy creation. The way church leaders shape congregants through the influence of sermons and leading prayer show how operant theology can take place as corporate worship and then is articulated more individualistically. Also

other people can influence the operant theology of an individual, such as a friend or family member, independent of normative teaching, although regularly in alignment with normative theology.

In other instances normative theology clearly acts as a corrective mechanism, like a thermostat as conservative evangelicals appear permeated with the Bible. This is often seen when conservative evangelicals compare believers and unbelievers who they see as having different attitudes toward creation, being set adrift in life with no normative theological anchor. Conservative evangelicals see the complexity of creation with a divine origin rather than what they interpret others seeing as mundane. Through church teaching in sermons and Bible passages conservative evangelicals gain a clear picture of the predicament or plight of unbelievers which they express in an operant theology in which they can evaluate others. As well as with salvation, this is also evidenced with something like gardening being interpreted as part of a normative understanding of stewardship. In this sense conservative evangelicals envisage the way things should be in an operant way for others, and resultant criticism emerges when they do not observe this. As well as normative theology influencing the way believers will negatively judge the situation of unbelievers, it can be that in other instances theological reflection upon normative theology can show how benefits can still result for unbelievers as well as believers. This was seen with the example of recovering drug addicts in Holland, when literally being taught to exercise dominion over animals has a healing effect both upon those humans and benefits the environment. This is with dominion being seen as a God given task in normative theology and that everyone should be involved with in some way.

With another example, the destruction of creation, I would suggest the powerful emotional response evident in some conservative evangelicals, is more due to a personal experience and/or reflection, which leads to a powerful operant stance or response, rather than being fed from obvious normative sources. In such instances I believe the operant acts more in an independent way, stimulated by experience rather than being strictly linked singularly or primarily to normative theology. Links between the voices of theology can therefore have more complex drives and others noticed included: a combination of normative theology and personal experience leading to operant theology; and personal experience resulting in the mining of normative theology for connections which then feed operant theology.

A common theme for conservative evangelicals (over half of interviewees) is how they express a greater love for rural or more God-made rather than urban areas as they appreciate the variety and complexity of what broader society would call the 'natural world' in which they live. Being surrounded by such environments aids their relationship with God in several ways in comparison to the inhibiting spiritual effects of industrial or human-made areas as here they can

gain symmetry with God, peace, be spiritually recharged, and enter a state of prayerfulness. It is very much an operant theology rich with experience and feelings, and deeply personal. It does not necessarily have obvious normative links but still never steps too far away as would be true with pantheism. In this instance I believe a richer and more diverse operant theology can be found expressed with conservative evangelicals than can be elicited from normative theology as respondents give a colour and depth to human experience that it would be impossible to find mirrored for everyone in Scripture. The operant theology of ordinary conservative evangelicals can actually express more profoundly a personal experience than is perhaps actually found in sermons and the Bible. This can be seen with appreciation of the beauty of creation and marvelling at its complexity. In some ways this empowers people as they become part of a living faith and tradition and are not just treated as automata but express a free-flowing fluid operant theology. Some may turn to normative theology to verify their experience, but operant theology is not dependent at every turn upon a new normative stimulus, yet in guidance by the Holy Spirit still operates within certain parameters or a sphere of regulation.

I would also suggest that the regular expression of memories, thoughts and feelings by conservative evangelicals during interview responses in this chapter are not always easily compartmentalised into the four voice theory of analysis. In a sense operant theology needs to be capable of incorporating these strong elements of human expression yet at times this seems a challenge with creation and leads to the following questions: for instance can operant theology be fed by feelings rather than normative theology?; are feelings elicited by normative theology or by experience?; and can the four voice theory incorporate thoughts or meditation upon something? Perhaps the four voice theory needs further categories so it can incorporate and differentiate between more diverse human experiences.

For some, normative teaching can reassure their operant experience. In some instances this can be in the form of backing up a choice that has already been made rather than specifically be the precursor to a particular decision. One example would be memories of personal health benefits of creation being an operant theology informed or perpetuated by experience. Operant theology bears testimony to creation being a link to God. Yet biblical figures have had their own experience with this. In this instance, of connecting with God through creation, normative theology does not instruct people to 'believe this and apply it', as is common in other instances, but more like 'here is something that is tangible and needs to be experienced personally'. In this sense it opens up personal expression and experience rather than closing it down.

In using the four voice theory of analysis in this chapter, I am aware that much of what is evidenced is an operant theology, which at times is clearly linked to a normative and espoused theology. However, links to formal theology are rarer and have less influence in their appreciation of creation. No interviewees referred to books that influenced their answers in relation to this chapter. In addition it was not easy to decipher the influence of formal theology through church teaching and the presentation of sermons that affect the appreciation of creation, something that would be much easier with doctrines in Chapter 6. The only obvious connection would be in relation to the need for conversion and how this is taught from the pulpit with the aid of formal theology. With the contents of this chapter being highly positive in relation to creation, it no doubt represents a focus that those formal theologians working in areas such as eco-theology could perhaps seek to draw upon and incorporate.

The positive ways in which interviewees detail their experiences of creation in this chapter could lay a solid foundation for the effective stewardship of creation as conservative evangelicals also acknowledge the damage which has been done to creation by human activities. However, appreciation of creation is only one input that conservative evangelicals attempt to incorporate into the development of a holistic theological and doctrinally based position with regard to their attitudes and behaviours toward the environment. It is the interpretation and application of four specific doctrines or 'normative theological bedrocks', what I term an 'evangelical environmental quadrilateral', in addition to four other complicating factors, which will now be assessed in Chapter 6.

### 6:1 INTRODUCTION

---

In subsequent sections of Chapter 6, it will be seen how the positive engagement with creation noted earlier in Chapter 5, and the possibility of this leading to authentic stewardship of creation, is not as simple a progression as might be imagined. Conservative evangelicals, in applying their knowledge of normative theology (mainly the Bible) to form what they believe to be an ‘authentically biblical response’ to the degradation of creation, attempt to incorporate, and are influenced by, a number of doctrines, the theological interpretation of which have a profound effect upon how they espouse their theological view of creation and respond to environmental challenges. The task of this chapter will be to present and unpack these doctrines which include the Fall, dominion and regeneration, evangelism and the gospel, and eschatology. I term these the ‘evangelical environmental quadrilateral’ that I identified as four interrelated themes that conservative evangelicals negotiate in their formation of environmental attitudes and behaviours, and they have clear links to both normative and formal theology. In addition to these doctrines, further important themes have been identified such as anthropocentrism, God’s sovereignty, fear of secular environmentalism and differences between corporate and individual engagement with environmental issues. As in the previous chapter, again the modified four voices model of theological reflection will be used to help understand more deeply the data which is presented and in addition how this feeds back in helping to understand the workings of the model itself and therefore how it can be developed further. Together the themes that are presented in this chapter provide a complex set of precursors to the development of environmental attitudes and behaviours. The first doctrine to be discussed goes back to the early part of Genesis, ‘the Fall’, and how respondents evaluate the effects of sin.

### 6:2 THE FALL: CREATION AND THE EFFECTS OF SIN

---

Interviewees come to know as part of their faith and normative biblical understanding that the creation they see as complex, diverse and magnificent is also in a ‘fallen’ state as a result of sin entering the world: a creation that is even seen as cursed and in bondage to corruption. God’s original creation made perfect, pristine, now has been distorted which is why ‘creation groans’ as we are told in Romans 8:22 (CH2:INT2); that ‘creation now has a kink or imperfection’ (CH2:INT6, CH4:INT9); that ‘it has gone awry’ (CH1:INT4); is ‘distorted by sin’ (CH2:INT2); and although beautiful



and magnificent, still 'not as it should be' (CH2:INT6). Even things such as the withering of leaves at autumn or the cyclical decay of flowers are seen as a manifestation of the hallmarks of sin which has resulted in death and decay (CH4:INT5). Creation bears the hallmarks of original sin and this can be seen in what broader society would call 'natural disasters', as reiterated by Glen:

Certainly creation is under a curse and we see the effects of that in so many ways such as volcanoes, tsunamis and earthquakes [...] when Adam fell, the whole world fell (Glen, aged 64, CH2:INT3).

Others saw this as expressed in predation in the animal kingdom with the unnecessarily gruesome nature of animals killing each other, such as tigers tearing apart zebras<sup>70</sup>. This is seen as unnecessary, speaking nothing of God's original purpose, but only of the Fall and entrance of sin into the world (CH2:INT7). In these senses the fallen state of creation is closely linked to concepts of eschatology and that it is waiting and needing to be 'put right' at the 'End Times' (CH1:INT5). As a result of the Fall it is believed that human relationships to the environment changed as the earth became more difficult to manage with 'thorns and thistles' and that it had to 'be worked by the sweat of your brow' (CH2:INT3). A fallen humanity then fails to exercise dominion in the way God would have intended.

In teaching what happened at 'the Fall' normative theology has a profound influence in that it moulds creation as in a state of imperfection from which it needs to be released (CH2:SERM2, CH2:SERM21, CH4:SERM6) (Chapter 6, Baptist confession of Faith; Point 5, AECW Doctrinal Belief statement). As a result of this understanding interviewees articulate a clear espoused theology in the form of 'this is the way things are' which has clear links to normative teaching in as much as 'because of this'. Espoused theology is therefore not just the aspect of theology embedded in 'what people say they do', as in Cameron *et al's* (2010) original model, but needs to be far more open to include the theology embedded within a person's broader dialogue. In addition, formal theology also identifies the effects of the Fall upon broader creation, that it is 'in sin' (Berkhof, 1966, p.134) and of the wider implications of the Fall or original sin for humanity (p.219-250). Whereas in the previous chapter I noted how the normative theology of conversion, influences espoused and operant theology from the 'inside out', in the instance of the Fall and the effects of sin upon creation, I believe this influences espoused and operant theology from the 'outside in'. Rather than something which lets the heart sing, like conversion, the Fall is incorporated like something more akin to a

---

<sup>70</sup> With tigers living in the Indian subcontinent and zebras in Africa, it is most probable the respondent meant lions and zebras.

branding iron. For conservative evangelicals the earth's natural environment is seen as fundamentally impaired and imperfect and that there is nothing any human effort can do to ultimately overcome this. For conservative evangelicals too much effort placed upon concern for the environment is seen as a vain attempt by humans to create their own utopia, whereas this is not God's plan for the future of the earth, as the only utopia will be the new heaven and earth. Furthermore, a normative theological understanding of original sin having a deep and visible effect upon creation, has also resulted in a negative effect on human ability to exercise dominion over creation, and such powerlessness has been noted by others (Ruether, 1992, p.139).

The environment is also burdened with the effects of present sin committed by people, which deleteriously impacts the environment. The destruction of creation is seen as a result of the wicked and sinful world we live in (CH4:INT6). Michael explained how original sin and present human sin therefore play their part:

I think there is the original sin that sort of caused the world to fall apart from the beginning, and there is also people sinning nowadays, like greed, wanting loads of money, not caring about other people or what it does to the environment [...] those two together make the world worse and worse (Michael, aged 18, CH2:INT5).

In addition to sin seen in creation as a result of the Fall there is also human sin affecting the environment since then, and at present, whereby human actions, often determined by things such as greed and materialism, result in the degradation of creation. Examples of this are given such as factories causing acid rain; over-fishing or hunting species into extinction (CH2:INT3); logging companies exploiting forest resources for financial profit with no long-term plan for replanting (CH3:INT2); or oil companies trying to access hard to reach resources which occasionally leads to disasters (CH3:INT1); 'robbing the earth of its riches' (CH4:INT6); greed, power and corruption preventing the equitable sharing of resources (CH1:INT6); or the general using up of the earth's fossil fuels at a rapid pace with no thought for future generations (CH2:INT3). Environmental problems were in one sense seen as 'the modern world waking up to the effects of human sin' also in a sense of spiritual sin, that as humanity separates itself from God and rejects His ways then there are physical consequences in the world (CH2:INT3): the parallel being made with 'spiritual famines' in the Old Testament (OT) resulting in physical famines for the inhabitants of the land. Here, a normative understanding that problems of the world are linked to the spiritual condition of people, as taught in the Bible, is developed into an espoused theology with the contemporary issue of the environment. Also, a normative understanding of how conditions on earth will deteriorate can result in a more fatalistic espoused and operant theology. For some, normative understanding of present

human sin leading to the degradation of creation can result in an operant theology that is against such sin, yet also common was how the effects of present and original sin result in powerlessness.

In some instances, attempting to protect the environment, in such a fallen world, was expressed somewhat fatalistically in that it is something of an impossible task: that in the face of sin and greed, protection was coming up against stronger forces which would be here until the End Times (CH1:INT5). For instance, that policy and initiatives to protect the environment were only 'a sticking plaster' over something far greater, that it was just dealing with symptoms and not causes, not digging at the real root which was human sin and rejection of God (CH3:INT7). For some, normative understandings of original and present sin, and that humans cannot change the state and predicament of creation, can result in an operant theology of human futility in trying to address the problem and therefore inaction. The plight of creation seen in somewhat fatalistic terms was summed up by John:

Part of these things are just because we live on a fallen earth, we do not live in Eden any more. We live in a broken world and extinctions point to a world that is dying, falling apart, that needs a Saviour. We can do everything under the sun, put all our money into it [*saving species*] and it is not going to change anything. It is a metaphor God is pointing at: He's cursed the land, it is going to be dying away and going to rack and ruin [...] an opportunity to tell people of our own mortality (John, aged 34, CH1:INT3).

Here, environmental decay takes on salvific purposes, being used as a metaphor, that what people of the earth really need is Jesus Christ, and no amount of human intervention with creation will change the predicament of a cursed created order (CH1:INT3). Sin then permeates creation to the point of it not being 'saveable' or 'redeemable' physically or by human effort, as would be attempted by environmentalists, but only by Jesus Christ. In terms of normative theology, a cursed creation combined with the goal of evangelism seems to prevent an operant theology of environmental protection and stewardship from kicking in.

Conservative evangelicals' initial viewing of creation through the lens of beauty is undergirded by a belief that no matter how beautiful it may seem to humans, it has still been deeply and negatively affected by the Fall of man as detailed with normative theology in Genesis 3:1-24. Formal theology denotes the Fall as the exercising of free will which led to humans becoming a 'horror' 'ill-adapted to the universe' (Lewis, 1998a, p.40). The normative teaching of the Fall influences the espoused theology of conservative evangelicals with a belief that whereas humans can overcome the effects of the Fall at any time during their life by accepting Jesus Christ as their

personal Saviour (CH1:SERM14, CH1:SERM18, CH2:SERM20), the only release for non-human creation comes at the End Times (CH4:SERM4, CH4:SERM6). Furthermore, the Fall has affected human ability to exercise godly dominion and historical and present sin by humans has caused the further decline of the environment. The terrain that leads to engagement with environmental stewardship concepts therefore runs up against its first complication. Moving on to the next doctrine, theological engagement with dominion, it might be surmised that another positive element is incorporated. So precisely what might dominion mean for the conservative evangelical, in terms of the original biblical remit and then specifically for those who have been 'born again'?

### 6:3 THE DOMINION MANDATE, STEWARDSHIP AND REGENERATION

---

Dominion and stewardship were identified as themes in almost all interviews undertaken, as evidenced within their espoused and operant theologies. Yet on the other hand barely anything from sermons presented at churches was identified as having a dominion and stewardship theme: showing how a clear gulf appears with this issue, between normative theology of church teaching, and operant and espoused theology that congregants articulate and experience. The latter is more based upon their personal understanding of dominion as defined in Genesis 1:26-27 rather than what they may have been taught from the pulpit. Linking back to Chapter 5, whereby a vibrant operant theology was noted after conversion which went far beyond the normative teaching of conversion, here also, the topic of dominion leads to a variety of rich espoused and operant stances which are more diverse than given in official church teaching, although again not contradicting it. However the starting point can often be drawn back to a normative teaching and a formal theological position; such as evangelicals seeing themselves as being created above the non-human creation, but below God, made in His image (CH2:SERM2) (Lloyd-Jones, 2003a, vol.1, pp.166-177), and then this being fleshed out more practically and fully by respondents (CH2:INT1). Here, a distinction is made that only humans have the ability to steward and this is therefore one of the unique differences in the way God created human and non-human life-forms (CH2:INT1). Evangelicals see humanity as being given the role of 'looking after God's creation, to be guardians of it' (CH1:INT5) and that this was at the very start of God's story of redemption as humans 'fall' shortly after they are given this role.

We have got responsibility for creation, we are the highest: the one to whom God has given a mind, the ability to think and reason, to explore and discover as well (Edith, aged 73, CH1:INT5).

Dominion was also seen in humans being 'set apart' from animals and being able to care for them; a caring stewardship rather than their domination:

We are to have charge of the animals and have so been set apart as a human race to be keepers of and controllers of the animal kingdom. That does not mean in my opinion that we destroy, we tend to care for, support and promote them, and not dominate them (Gwyn, aged 41, CH4:INT7).

So dominion, or human ability to express this, does not just go back to the dominion mandate of Scripture, but to actual days of creation, as this is when God created man with the ability and faculties to have wise dominion, adding further complexity to the normative root of dominion. To be good stewards was why God placed us on the earth (CH3:INT5) or that God gave us the earth not just as a home, but also that we might take care of it (CH3:INT6). The differences between humans and non-human animals was also expressed in 'God giving man a special place over everything, God made him different with a soul' (CH4:INT8) and that 'God put man on the earth to do good, to replenish it, and treat it respectfully' (CH4:INT1). Espoused theology in relation to dominion is therefore very positively expressed as one of care. That God created humans differently and that this is clearly linked to our responsibility to steward was explained by Matthew:

When we realise God has created all things, for us to enjoy, when you see it as His handiwork, then you don't lightly harm or destroy the world God has created. Because you bear in mind it's His creation. Adam had to tend the garden, and with fallen man it is the same idea. We are to look after the world God has given to us, so we grieve when we see people with no respect for God's creation (Matthew, aged 69, CH4:INT9).

Here acknowledgement of God as the source of creation which is for human enjoyment, as expressed as a normative teaching (CH4:SERM15) leads to an espoused respect and care for the natural order which humans are placed in charge of, and a sadness when the exercising of dominion visibly fails. The conservative evangelical espoused understanding of dominion is therefore far more positive than many of the empirical studies in Chapter 2 claimed.

However, these initial interpretations of dominion, as God's original remit and plan, are seen as being negatively influenced by the Fall. A fallen humanity fails to exercise dominion in the way God would have intended, such as the way He rules with love and care (CH2:INT2, CH4:INT6). This was described in more detail by Charles:

RESP: We are working in a fallen world [...] before the Fall it seems man had a duty to manage creation, but we have lost pristine creation, we have also lost some of our balance

of mind because of the Fall. It's true there is a certain rejuvenation in the Christian mind but we still work with fallen bodies.

CC: Would you see our fall as losing some of our ability to have dominion over creation?

RESP: Yes to some extent as creation is out of control, both because it has been affected by the Fall, God's curse, and we have been affected. Our ability to cope is partly gone due to our moral decline (Charles, aged 77, CH1:INT4).

In this reasoning the dominion mandate was distorted from the start, when humans fall and choose their own way rather than God's. Fallen humans with sinful hearts, 'in not seeing God's hand as Creator' results in them 'having no regard for God's world' (CH4:INT8). A difference expressed between believers and unbelievers is that the latter 'do not know God and that they have been given dominion over creation' whereas the Christian knows they have been given authority and that 'we should be looking after our environment' (CH3:INT3): pointing to the theoretical potential for Christians to be better stewards than non-Christians.

The destruction of creation is seen as a result of the 'wicked world we live in', cursed from the beginning, and that such sin Jesus heaps upon Himself, for the sake of humans (CH4:INT6). In this respect nothing less than a 'new heart', or Christian rejuvenation, 'being born again', will do, as much environmental sin is a 'heart issue' (CH2:INT4). Daniel explained that 'Most of the trouble in the world is because of sin, if people turned to God there would not be any problems like this' (Daniel, aged 73, CH3:INT5).

The reasoning then goes that in accepting Jesus and being rejuvenated by Him the negative effects of the Fall upon dominion can in some respect be reversed through 'born again' believers. Linking together creation, dominion, the Fall, then regeneration, it can be seen how normative theology reveals several peaks and troughs that are evident in espoused theology in relation to the environment.

A common theme expressed by interviewees was that they believed conservative evangelicals would treat the environment better than unbelievers, in contrast to the findings of the empirical studies noted in Chapter 2. It was believed that conversion to the faith, and the regenerated heart that ensued from this, would undoubtedly lead to a changed perspective on the environment, from where it will be natural that people will care more (CH2:INT5), or be more sensitive to the plight of animals for instance (CH4:INT1, CH4:INT3, CH1:INT2). Within formal theology there is also a strong focus upon regeneration and sanctification, such as can be seen in *This Way to Godliness* (Olyott, 2006), but this is stated in more general terms rather than having a

focus upon implications for human relationships to broader creation. This again points to a now repeated finding from the data in light of the four voices model of theological reflection: that a normative church teaching (as sometimes reiterated in formal theology) which is based upon a more general or foundational theme, is then expressed by congregants as an espoused or operant theology with a specific slant in relation to creation and the environment. In doing this, espoused and operant theology can become far more detailed and richer than normative teachings, as something of a 'ripple effect' takes place. Yet these more detailed articulation and application of biblical themes from congregants are still operating within some kind of 'orbit' or gravitational pull from normative theology, as they do not move to any positions that could be deemed unbiblical or heretical.

For the regenerated human heart, there would be disobedience in not stewarding creation as God Himself cares for His creation and we have His example to follow:

True Christians will care for the earth and creation as God commanded them to look after the earth, to till the ground, you know to look after the animals, to submit to the task He has given them. And man abuses that authority, not doing as God's law commands (Terry, aged 59, CH4:INT5).

The political ramifications of the sheer number of people converted by the Christian gospel in the past, was also referred to:

Only the gospel can change people's lives, because when God has been at work and people are saved, with revivals, wonderful things happened in our country for example with Shaftesbury, Wilberforce, stopping boys being used up chimneys and the slave trade and all that, because there were so many Christians, the Nonconformist Movement was listened to in parliament, then an improved treatment of humanity. So the gospel did it, many were converted then they had to listen to people on social issues (Matthew, aged 69, CH4:INT9).

In this sense Christian conversion comes first, changed attitudes second, and that Christians then have to be listened to on social issues.

Here conservative evangelicals see great positive effects of Christian rejuvenation. This is again more broadly, a central normative teaching (CH3:SERM6, CH2:SERM1, CH2:SERM4), although not articulated 'normatively' in relation to the environment. Yet respondents themselves 'join the dots' to express an espoused theology in relation to their attitudes toward creation, despite this level of detail not itself being provided in normative theology. The vast majority of evangelicals explained dominion in terms of an espoused caring stewardship. Some thought that caring for

animals and treating creation well would just naturally come from the genuine Christian, that cruelty to any life would be unthinkable (CH1:INT2). Another idea was that Christian people should act differently: 'As Christians, we should be careful about pollutions we create. As Christians, we are supposed to be tidy [...] we are an example to others' (Colin, aged 44, CH2:INT1). This reasoning places stewardship responsibilities firmly upon the ways Christian people live their lives. An interviewee explained how 'God will not be happy with us when we fail Him' in areas such as not stewarding the environment, and that when people do not adequately fulfil their role they then give a negative or even damaging witness to God: so that people 'would be against us rather than wanting to be more like us' (CH2:INT1). Yet the normative links here again may only be loosely evident, or that more general biblical principles are taken and then developed into a more clearly defined espoused theology by interviewees, as in finding a tool and then adapting it for further purposes. Like caring for creation to avoid sending damaging espoused and operant signals to others rather than caring for creation because it deserves to be cared for. For another, the fact that 'the earth is the Lord's and everything in it' led him to believe we should take stewardship responsibilities very seriously (CH2:INT6). Here God is not only the creator but the rightful owner who gives man a huge responsibility to steward His possessions (CH2:INT6). In this sense, humans are to care for what is not their own, but what is their Creator's: being an example of clear normative teachings from the Bible resulting in an espoused theology of care.

In conclusion, conservative evangelicals have an understanding of dominion as a sensitive care for creation that has been given as a directive from God. Humans have been created differently from all other life forms with this ability to manage the earth. This initially provides a positive backdrop for conservative evangelical engagement with caring for creation. However, conservative evangelicals see some of this ability to exercise dominion as having been lost at the Fall, which results in a failing to exercise wise dominion by societies at large. However, the complexity rises still further as the story of dominion takes another twist: as humans are 'born again' in becoming converted conservative evangelical Christians this, it is believed, has positive implications in that the regenerated Christian naturally cares more and loves more deeply than the unconverted, part of which can be seen in a sensitivity towards God's creation. With two normative doctrines covered, the complexity of the story of how conservative evangelicals engage with the environment is already becoming clear as normative theology provides both the initial impetus and backdrop to a journey with both ups and downs. Yet, if we add to the mix the most powerful normative drive and desire of conservative evangelicals, the churches' mandate to evangelise, further complexity can be noted. It might be surmised that evangelism would help the case of dominion by resulting in more people being converted, as discussed in the preceding sections, yet on an individual as well as corporate



level, the dominance of such desires can deeply affect other concerns and result in the terrain of 'conservative evangelicalism and concern for the environment' being even more difficult to traverse.

#### 6:4 THE GOSPEL: EVANGELISM AND CREATION

---

Conservative evangelicals have a clear and precise interpretation of what the Christian gospel is: the need for repentance; the acceptance of Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour as the only grounds for salvation; the need to be born again or saved; the attempt to live a life of holiness; and to follow the commission to bring this message to others.<sup>71</sup> This is *the* central normative teaching of the conservative evangelical church, as taught in historic creeds and statements of faith (Chapters 7-8, Baptist Confession of Faith, EMW Statement of Doctrinal Basis) and presented regularly during sermons<sup>72</sup> (CH4:SERM4, CH4:SERM12, CH3:SERM3, CH1:SERM6). In formal theology, sin and the subsequent need for a saviour have been defined as 'the message of the Bible' (Lloyd-Jones, 2010, Chapter 1, pp.4-19). It is also linked to the desire to see further conversions. This has also been seen during participant observation as congregants often praise those churches they see as 'preaching the gospel', whilst distancing themselves from those that they see as not. The gospel is presented in the following interview extract:

The gospel is quite simple really: it's that we are sinners. Sin began with Adam and Eve in the garden and Adam is like the federal head of all that God created, and that man was sent out of the garden under God's curse and punishment. But in His wonderful plan of salvation, He sent His own son, born of the Virgin Mary, and lived a perfect life. He then went all the way to the cross to die for us so that He is the last Adam, our federal head now, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Now in glory, but when He died on the cross He died for sinners, He died for us, because we are all sinners, there is not one righteous, we all need a saviour. And the Lord Jesus is our Saviour. When we come and repent and trust and accept Him as our Saviour; then we are right with God. We are able to come into His presence because we are in Christ (Doreen, aged 73, CH4:INT3).

Therefore to evangelise, or bring the good news of Jesus Christ to those that do not know Him, is seen as the central remit of the church or the 'Great Commission' as taught in normative theology

---

<sup>71</sup>The gospel is self-portrayed as a defining feature of conservative evangelicalism in comparison to many broader denominations.

<sup>72</sup>A total of 59 sermons were identified as presenting this gospel message during fieldwork.

(Matthew 28: 16-20) which powerfully reverberates in espoused and operant theology. This was further explained by Doreen:

There is a hymn which says 'The past has been forgotten, a present joy is given, a future hope is promised'. And that is what we have in the Christian gospel. You know and it is so wonderful it is to be shared. It's too wonderful to keep to ourselves. So our ministry in the evangelical church is to evangelise and tell others (Doreen, aged 73, CH4:INT3).

The conservative evangelical gospel being the chief end of church ministry is also backed up by historic formal theology, as the titles of Jonathan Edwards' (2002 [17--]) chapters show: 'Preaching the Gospel brings poor sinners to Christ' (pp.149-154) and 'The work of the ministry is saving sinners' (pp.155-180). One church pastor, in noting the theme of my project in how Christians care for creation, even went as far as defining this in terms of presenting the gospel to others, in caring for the spiritual needs of humanity, as his own way of 'caring for creation' (CH3:INT10). The gospel's central normative positioning as articulated in church teaching results in an equally central and strong espoused theology by interviewees of what the conservative evangelical church's agenda is and this then also clearly links further down the hierarchy to an operant theology of putting this into practice. In presenting this data it is not my desire to criticise this drive to spread the gospel, but to foster links and understanding of how interpretations of the gospel can result in operant theology in relation to the environment.

A common theme is that conservative evangelicals express a hierarchical structure when discussing how they should prioritise certain issues. First is always the desire to evangelise and 'spread the gospel'. This is seen as an eternal life and death issue and therefore the greatest single need that humans have. After human spiritual needs are catered for, then human physical welfare comes second. Concern for broader creation can only gain momentum after these two more important things are addressed and many conservative evangelicals even oppose engagement with human social issues, unless it is an aid to evangelism, as it can be seen as a threat to pure gospel work (CH4:INT9). Some suggest that stewardship and evangelism are not in opposition, that both can be addressed, though the gospel is the most important. This was stated by Luke:

As evangelicals we should have a respect and care for the created order, not as an end in itself, but as it reveals the greatness and glory and majesty of God. Although we have a certain responsibility for the created order, but at the end of the day, I do not want to put one against the other because in one sense there is no reason why they should be in conflict with each other. At the end of the day, the church's big commission and agenda, is not to

save the environment, but preach the gospel and we mustn't forget that (Luke, aged 47 CH2:INT6).

Luke went on to explain how Christ got his disciples together and gave them the churches' Great Commission (Matthew 28: 16-20), to preach the gospel and to save people, not to save the planet with environmentalism, but this does not negate a concern and stewardship responsibility that we have (CH2:INT6). Normative teaching sets the conservative evangelical gospel as something highly defined and with a central permanence and durability, from which can flesh out a hierarchy as other things are given lower importance. Although an espoused theology of human responsibility for creation is acknowledged, having links itself to the less talked about normative teaching of dominion, it can never rise very high on the 'normative hierarchy' and therefore this can result in a 'toned down' espoused and operant response, specifically as shall be seen with church engagement later in this chapter.

Andrew also stated his position, that stewarding creation should not be in conflict with a desire to reach out with the gospel:

The churches' mandate is to go into the world and make disciples and baptising them, teaching them all Christ's commands [...] If everyone on earth was obeying Christ's command to seek first the kingdom of God and then rely on His provision for food and shelter, it would do the environment a lot of good. It is actually when people are pursuing their own selfish, greedy agendas that the most damage is done. The whole world is God's and redemption is God's and so a stewardship attitude to creation should not be in conflict with a genuinely gospel centred desire to reach the lost (Andrew, aged 31, CH2:INT2).

Here, this respondent again reiterates how those who know Christ would be part of a world that honours God through creation, being provided for but not taking with greed, and that this therefore should be in harmony with the gospel. Another interviewee went further in expressing that the chief end of the church was to glorify God, of which evangelism was the primary but not only part (CH3:INT10).

However, more commonly during interviews, evangelism can become such an overarching theme that there is little desire left to become involved with other issues, such as stewardship responsibilities. In this instance, creation stewardship can be interpreted as a 'threat to the gospel' and something that is therefore resisted, despite there being a biblical mandate to exercise dominion. The dangers seen in giving what are deemed peripheral concerns too much eminence is also reiterated in formal theology (Ferguson, 1987, pp.4-5). More peripheral normative teachings

can therefore be seen as something that can interfere with central normative teachings, creating resistance to the former. This leads to a palpable unresolved tension in some when asked about the place of creation stewardship in the life of conservative evangelicals: with a positive affirmation that 'we are to preach the gospel' followed by a more hesitant acknowledgement 'but we are still responsible for creation'. The normative-espoused-operant spine of evangelism can be such a strong theme in the life of some conservative evangelicals that it can be seen as creating something of a short circuit, which cuts out other issues, even those that are biblically warranted, from thinking and practice. For some, the pre-eminence they give to the gospel is therefore one of the most central and powerful influences that I identified as leading to a lack of formation of environmental stewardship concepts. It also represents how the Bible (or understanding of different normative teachings) can be an arena of discord, or as others have found that the Bible can be a place of struggle as people interpret it (Bennet, 2014, p.13). From my own data this can result in an espoused theology which articulates one normative teaching (dominion) as a threat to the other (evangelism). This furthers our understanding of the workings involved in the modified four voices theory in as much as different normative teachings, or their reception and interpretation, can create a place of conflict when expressed further down the hierarchy in an espoused theology. In addition, different interviewees rank normative teachings in different ways leading to espoused theologies that are not uniform.

Although conservative evangelicals claim they have a better understanding and respect for creation than unbelievers, that being born again will have positive effects for the environment as seen in Chapter 5, what can happen is that a desire to give this gospel to others can result in the neglect of other concerns such as environmental stewardship. This seems to be a result of preaching which heavily focuses upon spreading the gospel (as evidenced within 59/128 or 46% of sermons given during fieldwork). I believe that for some, their understanding of the gospel has a narrowness that can filter out other concerns, as though spreading the gospel is telling people with words rather than showing a Christ-like character in all things (CH2:INT3) or a gospel which is more about the process of conversion rather than enlarging this to what humans were before and what they should become afterwards. The normative teaching of evangelism can take over so strongly for some conservative evangelicals that what can result is an espoused 'one-track' vision (Ch1:INT8). When asked if he saw a place for conservative evangelicals to be involved in creation stewardship, Bob replied:

Yes, but Christians should really first and foremost be trying to win people for the Lord, and stop them going to hell you know, but I am sure they would treat animals well naturally wouldn't they? (Bob, aged 77, CH1:INT2).

Stewardship, particularly treating animals well, as espoused theology is seen as something that would naturally flow from the true believer, but not an issue to be pressed, as it is not what really matters, like spreading the gospel which has a central normative theological basis. Physical needs or social concerns can be seen as a direction that would be dangerous for the church and its evangelising remit:

I don't think the church should be doing other things, getting involved in aspects the world can offer [...] there can be a bit too much of that. I think the chief and primary priority has got to be preaching the gospel, the Word, but as Christians we should show that we care (Rhian, aged 68, CH4:INT8).

In the face of the conservative evangelical gospel, creation stewardship can be seen as a thing 'people in the world' can be left to get on with, whilst conservative evangelicals do the more important work of evangelising. Yet again here I would argue that a lack of crystalized thought as to what the implications of living out the gospel are in a broader sense, and specifically in relation to the environment, requires further mining of normative theology and the input of formal theology.

That interpretations of the gospel (both in the significance people give to it and the way they understand it) can limit concern for the environment can be seen in how some conservative evangelicals were more interested in environmental stewardship or broader social issues before their conversion (which in these instances would contradict their previous claims that conservative evangelicals would naturally care more for creation than unbelievers). Yet after conversion, concern for stewardship and broader social issues can pale into insignificance compared with the need to evangelise and save people from what they believe will be an eternal torment. This can be seen with one individual who for many years went marching for Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) because of his concern over the nuclear issue. However once converted to the conservative evangelical faith, he marched the following year 'for the cause of Christ' and not the nuclear issue, as having so many people together gave what he saw as a great opportunity to give out Christian tracts (CH1:INT2). In his choice to do this I am not criticising the actions of the interviewee, but for the purposes of analysis what is evident is how the normative theology of the gospel as understood and lived by individuals who have been converted, clearly 'realigns' their operant theology as it both prioritises some things and marginalises others, bringing individuals back to what is reiterated to be

the centrally important thing. Another respondent who had only been converted several years ago admitted about climate change:

This would have been a debate that before I became a Christian I would have been intimately involved in, but rather than looking at this kind of stuff now I am looking at the Bible [...] you could almost say I have become more narrow minded since I have become a Christian, like instead of exploring and looking at all these big issues, I am focusing more upon myself and the gospel (Gary, aged 43, CH2:INT4).

Here again in a similar vein, conversion to the conservative evangelical faith has resulted in an overriding focus upon the gospel which has reduced involvement with issues that would otherwise have gained some momentum in their lives. An unresolved question that could be asked is that whether or not these are purely examples of the 'thermostat' idea of normative theology kicking in with individuals who have been converted, bringing them more deeply into an authentic conservative evangelical mind-set, or is it that after conversion individuals are allowing one normative lead to take hold too strongly? It could also be that there is an element of both things happening.

For another interviewee, becoming a member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) had little if anything to do with a desire for the welfare of birds, but was an undercover outreach mission with the desire to make contacts for the church and witness to those attending (CH1:INT1). The tension in the conservative evangelical mind-set is seen in how when stewardship is theoretically incorporated into practice it is done quite often in a way purely to promote evangelism, or God's qualities, not that creation deserves protection as an end in itself. In this instance, creation is moulded into an evangelising aid. It may be that the interviewee has failed to reflect upon the view that it can be glorifying to God when believers enjoy creation and the Creator for its own sake. For others, involvement with stewardship was seen as a 'defence of the faith' rather than for creation's own sake or human well-being. For instance, taking the example of the Apostle Paul being 'all things to all people': to be careful about stewarding creation to have the opportunity to minister or witness to people (CH3:INT10). Here it is as if dominion is incorporated as an aid to the normative teaching of spreading the gospel, rather than being distinct itself. Creation therefore loses its own authentic voice and this example uncovers a further insight into the workings of the four voice theory in that rather than each normative teaching being its own drive to an espoused position, one normative teaching can be in effect hijacked by another or more central normative teaching, for its own purposes.

With conservative evangelicals going to these lengths to evangelise, it can easily be seen how a genuine expression of creation stewardship could be interpreted as a distraction from what really matters. This view of the Christian gospel which becomes so powerful as to nullify other concerns makes it a huge obstacle to a more balanced view of Christian objectives, or a more holistic interpretation of the 'good news' which could include caring for creation.<sup>73</sup> For some, explicitly incorporating environmental stewardship into the remit of the church is seen as 'being a mistake', as it is not seen as part of the gospel which is the church's real remit (CH4:INT10). In this way exercising dominion or environmental stewardship is blocked from explicit church life and therefore ends up as something of a personal or even closet activity for those Christians who choose to be involved in some way in their private life. In normative theology, the gospel has a central powerful place within church teaching, whereas dominion, although being able to be defined as something with normative standing, it is only tentatively responded to and I believe stewardship and dominion are not given 'their own adequate space', perhaps for fear of it being given 'too big a space'. Getting too involved with environmental concerns would be seen as tipping the balance away from the gospel, as Barry expressed:

We [*conservative evangelicals*] couldn't just become a kind of ecological society, because then we are missing the mark, we are diverging into something that is not the priority. We have to keep the priority what it should be, allowing some involvement with other things, but keep the priority the priority (Barry, aged 50, CH1:INT6).

Perhaps, how the desire to evangelise, faced with eschatological certainties, and the effects this can have in seriously hampering a genuine expression of caring for creation, or the tensions in the evangelical environmental quadrilateral with competing themes, were summed up best by Emma when asked about whether or not she was concerned about any aspects of the destruction of creation:

Oh there are lots really. But again it's prioritising what's, what's vital to change now and erm [...] pwww [*expression of tension*]. I think mainly it's just waiting for the Lord's return and concentrating on those things that are necessary, to glorify Him, to glorify God. We can't preserve this world. I admire people who are doing their best to try and preserve this, that and the other animals perhaps from being extinct and so on, but then I just think everything

---

<sup>73</sup> For instance see the Consultation Paper, *Lusanne Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel: Call to Action* (2012). Here, creation care is defined as a part of the gospel under the Lordship of Christ. However, as my data has shown, something such as this may be perceived with suspicion by those taking part in my study, such as an unnecessary re-working of the gospel or as having to admit they had previously been in error.

has got to die, so does it really matter that much? You know let's prioritise what is really necessary (Emma, aged 60, CH4:INT4).

Here, Emma's innate concern for wildlife, having informed me during the interview of previously being a supporter of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and being strongly against animal cruelty, is placed in a losing competition with the normative theological doctrinal lens of a fallen creation that will be destroyed, and that people need saving as a matter of urgency before the return of the Lord. Although the palpable tension exists, and creates something of an emotional uneasiness in the respondent's heart, again the nature of the conservative evangelical gospel powerfully displaces an effective 'operant' concern for creation, as something that could matter deeply ends up being processed as 'does it really matter' at all. Here the problem could be identified in the standpoint that 'saving souls' is not just the main thing that matters, but all that matters. Just as the desire to evangelise can have serious consequences for the care of creation, this theme is even more powerful when combined with eschatological certainties, and is the final addition to the complex conservative evangelical environmental quadrilateral.

#### 6:5 LAST THINGS: ESCHATOLOGY AND CREATION

---

A common theme for conservative evangelicals is a belief that we are now living in the 'latter' or 'last days', although there is far from common agreement of what this means in terms of longevity of time.<sup>74</sup> For instance 11 interviewees expressed the view that the End Times were imminent, but some five interviewees expressed uncertainty as to how far off the End Times were, and that this could be a long way into the future. Eschatology is another area that again receives detailed attention from formal theologians within conservative evangelicalism, such as *The Church and the Last Things* (Lloyd-Jones, 2003a, vol. III, pp.1-248) and as a normative church teaching it formed a part of 11 sermons presented during fieldwork. As conservative evangelical Christians incorporate passages of the Bible which state this world will end as we know it and a new heaven and earth will be created (Revelation 21:1, 2 Peter 3:13), this normative theological understanding also links with evangelism in that their primary goal would be to save others from the wrath to come while there is still time. In believing in an imminent End Times, a rational conclusion would be that this would lead

---

<sup>74</sup> During interviews for this project evangelicals who postulated the view that we are now in 'the last days' further explained that this could be anything from literally any day now to thousands of years in the future. This is deemed important to note as some readers may presume 'the last days' can only mean a very short period of time.



to a far lower level of environmental concern amongst conservative evangelical Christians. In effect, the reasoning would be that if something will be laid waste at some point in the near future then there is little point in trying to preserve it. Terms such as conservation and preservation that regularly figure in environmental discourses would not be deemed as having too much importance.

With the normative theology of church teaching, sermons that had an eschatological focus during fieldwork presented themes such as the following: that we need to escape the wrath to come (CH2:SERM1); that Jesus will return and those saved will be given new bodies and be resurrected with Him (CH2:SERM11, CH1:SERM17); that no one knows the hour but world history is coming to an end point (CH2:SERM7); and that creation will be released from its groaning (CH4:SERM4). In addition, more precisely what will happen is that there will be joy for all creation at that time but that humanity will be split down the middle and only those that have faith in Christ shall be saved (CH4:SERM1). The same sermon also postulated that as the earth shall be burnt up we should not be so attracted to the things of it (CH4:SERM3). As with the Fall earlier, eschatological interpretations show how normative theology affects espoused and operant theology from the outside in rather than the inside out.

When eschatological beliefs focus upon an imminent end of the world as we know it, things happening in the world are also processed as 'signs' of the End Times. As conservative evangelicals literally incorporate normative teaching (biblical texts) relating to eschatology into their Christian mind-set, common to this is that there will be a Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:7); a judgement (Matthew 16:27); and a discontinuation of the earth in its current form and the creation of a new heaven and earth where true believers will dwell (Revelation 21:1); this being something that could happen at any moment (Matthew 24:36), and that conditions will deteriorate on earth prior to this event (Matthew 24: 5-7). Of the 37 interviews analysed, eschatological themes arose in 27 of those interviews and 10 interviews had no mention of eschatology. Eschatological beliefs can strongly influence environmental attitudes and behaviours: the obvious way is in caring less for a temporary earth and the development of fatalistic attitudes toward creation. However, it must also be noted that a number of conservative evangelicals, 10 out of 27, although believing in the End Times, express the view that this should not affect a desire or ability to care for creation and exercise dominion, even expressing distaste about their contemporaries who may allow eschatological beliefs to hinder their desire to care for creation. Eschatological beliefs may therefore not be as powerful a single determinant of poor environmental attitudes for conservative

evangelicals more generally, as has previously been thought.<sup>75</sup> For this, conservative evangelicals put forward several reasons: that we do not know when the End Times will be and therefore still have to exercise responsible care for future generations; that it depends upon whether we believe the earth will be destroyed or renewed; and that other doctrines have to be taken into account such as stewardship responsibilities. Eschatology can therefore promote fatalism for some yet not impinge upon agency for others. In relation to the four voices of theology, it is apparent that a topic with strong normative roots such as eschatology can be interpreted in different ways by people within the same group, an instance of how normative teaching is filtered through people's own intellect and reasoning which results in various differences in the espoused and operant theology that can result from such different interpretations. Whereas the official church stance would be that there would be voices in unison, what actually happens is that although all congregants believe in the reality of the return of the Lord and End Times, how this actually happens, the consequences of it and the effects upon environmental attitudes and behaviours are far more diverse. This can be related to the finding in the previous chapter of how the normative teaching of conversion leads to a far more diverse espoused and operant theology than can be identified from the initial normative starting point, as congregants then have some freedom to decipher how the initial teaching works out in more detail, for themselves. Likewise this can also be seen with eschatology.

That a belief in an imminent End Times could lead to a lower concern for the environment was evidenced by Margaret:

RESP: They [*society*] are so busy trying to preserve this earth, which is in a state of decay isn't it I feel [...] I do wonder how much longer we are going to have on earth.

CC: You are talking about the return of the Lord?

RESP: Yes, yes, the end of all things. Consequently I am not that worried about trying to preserve the earth, although I hate to see real desecration of it. But the general population are more concerned about that than they are about their own soul (Margaret, aged 74, CH1:INT1).

In comparing broader society's seeming preoccupation with the environment, Margaret went on to explain how they make preserving the earth their idol which they put before God, but that as a conservative evangelical Christian her hope is in the new creation as this one is just passing. In

---

<sup>75</sup> For a detailed overview of how eschatological interpretations are deemed to have led to environmental apathy in one specific country, see Cho (2010). Cho's work is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7, and an overview of his reasoning is detailed in Figure 20, p.251.

conclusion, she therefore had no interest in or expressed any care for environmental issues, such as species extinctions (CH1:INT1). Margaret makes the demarcation in her espoused theology between 'preserving' the earth (which she interprets from her normative theological understanding as impossible) and 'desecration' of the earth which she sees as wrong, although I would be hesitant to suggest this is strongly related to normative understanding but rather perhaps some innate notion of right and wrong. How eschatology can result in a lack of concern for the environment and future generations was also expressed by others (CH4:INT1).

That a sense of fatalism (as an espoused theology) because of eschatological beliefs (or normative theology), combined with an overriding belief in God's sovereignty (also understood from normative teaching), is held in tension with human responsibility was evident in the following exchange from Chris:

There is the idea that everything is going to burn up so why worry about whether we are taking care of creation: I think there is a certain grain of truth in that. Coupled with that, the idea that the world is not going to come to an end until God wants it to, when God said after the flood, the times and seasons are going to continue [...] But we still have to, we don't know when the earth will burn up, so every generation does need to be mindful of what it is doing, to be a good steward (Chris, aged 37, CH4:INT10).

Here Chris exemplifies the way in which this trilateral of normative teachings (eschatology, God's sovereignty and human responsibility) do not result in a straightforward harmony when brought together, which in turn leads to an espoused or operant uncertainty as to what the 'correct' position is that should be adopted. In addition, it also shows the way in which one normative teaching can act as a corrective or rudder in negotiating a path for other normative doctrines. Eschatological certainties (as reiterated within normative theology) also led to a lack of fear or concern for environmental problems (as evidenced within espoused and operant theology): in a sense, having a strong belief in a definite eschatology equated to not having to fear uncertain outcomes from such things as environmental catastrophes:

I'm not afraid of environmental issues, I think some people see things like global warming, these kind of things that are potentially bringing the end of the world as we know it, I have confidence that Christ will return and that brings the end of the world as we know it and no natural disaster (Andrew, aged 31, CH2:INT2).

For conservative evangelicals, the normative theological understanding of God's unravelling of time, or providence over history, means that environmental issues cannot become so critical as to

themselves threaten this aspect of God's sovereignty. This results in an espoused theology which prevents any engagement with environmental themes in ways 'independent' of these normative theological bedrocks. Rather, any engagement is closely tied to or regulated by normative teachings.

Conservative evangelicals believe the earth in its present form will no longer exist at some point in the future yet there is a point of contention in whether there will be a total destruction or renewal of some kind. A belief in total destruction can in some ways negate stewardship concerns whereas a belief in continuity of some form or refreshment of the present earth aids a more caring approach to stewardship. This tension was summed up by Luke:

How much effort or care we put into stewardship might be dependent upon what you think happens in the future [...] 2 Peter 3 is a big factor in this, I have heard some Christians say well yes we should sort out some recycling but at the end of the day the whole thing is just going to be destroyed by fire anyway, so what is the point almost? If you keep a view that the whole thing is just going to be obliterated anyway in order to make the new creation, it might serve as a discouragement to take care of the planet (Luke, aged 47, CH2:INT6).

Here Luke points to how normative teachings can be interpreted differently resulting in very different espoused theologies; such as whether to care or not. If the conservative evangelical believes in a total destruction, then other normative and espoused theological inputs need to be relied upon to counter a desensitisation to stewardship:

Even if you do think it is going to be destroyed that does not rule out other things such as it is the Lord's, and therefore we ought to care for it and treat it with respect. Whatever you think is going to happen at the end, that doesn't negate the stewardship responsibility given in the early chapters of Genesis (Luke, aged 47, CH2:INT6).

A normative understanding of stewardship can therefore literally hold in check the negative effects of other normative doctrinal interpretations, again pointing to how human engagement with the Bible, and particularly as seen with the linear and hierarchical four voice model of theological reflection, is far more complex than what is laid out in Figure 15. With the thermostat idea described in Chapter 4, it could be that normative theology does not just act in this way in relation to espoused and operant theology, but also in that one normative teaching can act as a thermostat in adjusting the influence of further normative theologies, depending upon individual interpretations.

With Luke there is no definitive position as a level of uncertainty exists, however the answer points to the possibility of continuation in some form. For others, elements of renewal may exist in combination with a totally new entity (CH2:INT5). Whilst some admitted they were unsure but

thought it could mean 'refresh' (CH3:INT9). As the examples show, evangelical interpretations of what will happen at the End Times are far from uniform. This may be due to the issue not featuring a great deal in detailed pastoral teaching as was evidenced during fieldwork. The fact that some evangelicals hold together destruction and renewal as possibly working together may challenge the thinking of commentators who with human reasoning presume it has to be the former.

One of the main reasons eschatological beliefs can negate concern for the environment is that the sooner it is believed the End Times might come, the less reason there is to be concerned about future generations, with a concern for 'intergenerational justice' being a key concept of broader environmental ethics (Des Jardins, 2001, pp.67-89). Yet just as some interview data analysed earlier showed how eschatological beliefs can be interpreted as the End Times being upon us and there is little need to care for the future of the earth in any long-term sense, many other interviewees, although believing in the same eschatological reality, did so in a way that did not hamper their desire to care (ten interviewees) and especially for future generations (seven interviewees). Particularly in relation to 'uncertainty' as to when the Lord will return, it is something that many conservative evangelicals point to as a reason to still be responsible stewards (CH4:INT8, CH3:INT9). Emily makes the point about the irresponsibility or ignorance that can be involved with using eschatological beliefs as a reason not to care for the earth:

I think to have the opinion that there is going to be a new earth anyway so I can do what I like to this one, ha - is a bit irresponsible, yes that rather defeats the object of looking after the planet and having dominion over it. It is an issue that God will bring to an end the current world we live on, but we don't know when that will be, so we have to leave the world in a suitable condition for people that might be on it later [...] to be responsible in that way (Emily, aged 27, CH3:INT9).

Here Emily's reflection upon how others within her group may have interpreted normative theology with negative environmental ramifications feeds her further exploration of normative theology and its application in her own espoused theology, to act as a 'corrective'. It was also expressed how eschatological beliefs should not trump a Christian's duty to be creation stewards and the promise of a new heaven and earth is not seen as reason to forfeit responsibility for this one (CH1:INT6) and for generations to come (CH1:INT8). As can be seen by the evidence presented in this section, a belief in conservative evangelical eschatology can lead to a more indifferent attitude toward stewardship by some, yet for others it does not seem to impinge upon their desire to exercise stewardship responsibly.

## 6:6 GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND CREATION

---

A major evangelical normative theological theme is that of God's sovereignty both over current events and of the ultimate fate of the earth and its inhabitants, and is taught in formal theology (Ferguson, 1981, p.16; Carson 2000, pp.55-66). Furthermore, that 'God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything' including the theme of election, in choosing who will be saved (MacArthur, 1993, p.153) and that 'The universe is not subject to chance. There is no possibility that God's plans will fail' (p.170). God's sovereignty was a theme which came up regularly during sermons presented during the course of this research, being identified as part of 28 different sermons. The belief is that God is 100% sovereign with things that happen, yet humans are still 100% responsible for their actions (CH1:SERM8). It is one of the conundrums of the Christian faith. The conservative evangelical God is not a distant entity who watches over human existence on the earth and chooses to interfere now and then, but a God who is sovereign and intimately active moment to moment. This is also reiterated in formal theology as God's providence as opposed to deistic interpretations (Lloyd-Jones, 2003a, vol.1, p.142). Conservative evangelical understanding of God's sovereignty is therefore very precise. Some sixteen interviewees chose to talk about God's sovereignty over creation. Some saw this in passages of Scripture, especially in the OT whereby God used creation to make life difficult for His people when they were disobedient to Him (droughts and plagues were mentioned by CH4:INT5 and CH4:INT10), or used the elements of creation to prosper people when they were obedient (CH3:INT10). In this sense what broader society might call 'natural consequences' or 'natural cycles' evangelicals can interpret as part of God's sovereignty. God is seen as the one who has total control over His creation, such as calming the winds and seas, and everything in creation is seen as at His command (CH4:INT5), even as the sun rises to show His mercy to us (CH3:INT10).

Of crucial importance to this thesis is how the normative teaching of God's sovereignty leads to various espoused and operant theologies. One such observation is the way in which it can move human espoused and operant theologies away from the sphere of 'human responsibility' towards the sphere of being under a 'sovereign God', or in other words to stifle or limit action or operant theology. One interviewee offered this explanation of why evangelicals' understanding of God's sovereignty could possibly make them less concerned about the environment than unbelievers:

I can explain why evangelicals might be less concerned, I don't know if it's a good reason all the time, but maybe people would say well er, like a default people might fall back on, even myself, is well ultimately God is in control of all this, but it isn't a good excuse in a lot of

areas as ultimately God still holds us all responsible. So it is an excuse but not a full answer (Mark, aged 38, CH3:INT10).

Such reasoning was evidenced with others talking about recycling:

Though I do believe in conservation, I do believe we should take care of anything that we can that's around us [...] but sometimes I just feel it's like trying to stick a sticky plaster on top of something and I think God already knows what is going to happen. So them running around doing this and that is not going to make a vast amount of difference. But I do think that we should recycle of course, you can't keep on taking something (Eden, aged 46, CH3:INT6).

This seems to represent two competing themes, a common sense type reaction, that of course it is right to recycle and be concerned about conservation, but then this is set off balance by the thought that the future is already written and in God's hands which negates wholehearted involvement, or that normative interpretation can lead to an espoused and operant inertia.

One topic whereby God's sovereignty is regularly brought up by evangelicals is in relation to climate change. Another interviewee discussing both sides of the argument about anthropogenic climate change, admitted he had not made up his mind either way when it came to looking at the science, but then concluded that 'it is all in God's hands anyway, there is no doubt about that' so that whether it is happening or not, God is ultimately sovereign over this (CH2:INT3). Furthermore, God was seen as having sovereignty over creation to the point of 'being able to sort it out', that no matter how much we interfere, with something like greenhouse gas, it was in His hands and He would have His way (CH3:INT6, CH3:INT9). Another expressed how climate had changed since creation and was in cycles under God's sovereignty and that God would not allow catastrophic consequences from human influence as this was not His plan for the future of the earth (CH3:INT5). Here, a normative understanding of God's sovereignty and purpose for the end of creation do not totally mitigate human concern for something like the effects of climate change, but they do influence it to the degree that environmental issues will never raise to alarmist levels with some evangelicals, because if they did, then things are being out of control which is not compatible with a sovereign God. Certain environmental issues, like climate change, trigger normative theological beliefs (like God's sovereignty), which then powerfully influences espoused and operant theologies.

God's sovereignty was also expressed when looking at species extinctions:

Well I think it's regrettable because something has come to an end: that is the end of a species, there's nothing much more you can do about it, but also at the back of my mind is

that God is in control of everything. God has allowed that to happen so you know an animal that has become extinct, it is not because God has lost control or overlooked that animal, it has been a part of God's plan that that animal has become extinct (Gary, aged 43, CH2:INT4).

At first sight this may seem fatalistic and could lead to apathy over the plight of endangered animals but the respondent went on to explain, God may allow an extinction so we can learn from this, such as a definitive warning to be better stewards (CH2:INT4). In this sense, God's sovereignty, although more generally could lead to less environmental concern, with specific examples, with individual evangelicals, it can prompt them to try and be better stewards. God's sovereignty was also seen to have potentially positive impacts in that the international cooperation needed for resolving major environmental issues, could only be prompted by a sovereign God (CH3:INT9). The application of a normative interpretation can therefore be very personal and individualistic leading to precisely formulated espoused positions of great variety.

Some saw environmental fears as an expression of a lack of faith. In this respect, evangelicals do not believe we live in a flimsy world that could come to an end any time with things like catastrophic climate change, as 'the End Times' were 'firmly in Christ's hands' (CH2:INT2) and the importance of not underestimating the resiliency of nature has also been expressed in formal theology (Hayward, 2011, p.51). Environmental concerns did not raise alarm bells or high levels of fear, as God's sovereignty, particularly in the future with eschatology, was elevated in the evangelicals' mind to a far more central importance (CH2:INT2). Again, as in the previous section, a normative understanding of the Christian unravelling of time can result in a 'moderating effect' upon the perceived dangers faced by environmental problems. This could be seen as a normative thermostat which prevents conservative evangelicals treading the same path as broader society when it comes to environmental themes, with both espoused and operant theologies that can be richly sceptical, hesitant and disengaged.

## 6:7 TO STEWARD CREATION WHILST BEING DEEPLY ANTHROPOCENTRIC

---

Anthropocentrism or a human-centred way of seeing the world was a strong theme expressed in 19 interviews and could be described as something of an unshakeable foundation. For some conservative evangelicals it is a 'filter' that removes more holistic concern, or a 'lens' which can only see human issues, which deeply affect the way evangelicals see non-human creation and how they value it. This is a central result of major biblical doctrines and normative theological church



teachings such as humans being made in the image of God (Gen 1:26, CH2:SERM2), being made above the animals (Psalm 8:4-8, CH3:SERM6, CH2:SERM16), being given authority over them (Luke 15:25, CH2:SERM2), and also that only humans have eternal souls and therefore partake in salvation (Isaiah 31:3, Ecclesiastes 3:21, Genesis 2:16). That humans are above the rest of creation is also reinforced through formal theology, as aspects of bearing the Creator's image (Tyler, 2003, pp.60-70). Yet as shall be seen, anthropocentrism is something of a double edged sword—or cuts both ways—in blocking concern for the environment in some ways, yet promoting it in others, such as when coupled with dominion. When analysing interviews it is therefore something that acts as a fracture or fault line between those with a milder anthropocentrism characterised by a caring stewardship and closely linked to concepts of dominion and the more extreme anthropocentrism which elevates human concerns so highly that non-human concerns are side-tracked or effectively blocked. Anthropocentrism or a human centred way of seeing the world is again the result of normative teachings that can be interpreted in an espoused theology, and applied in an operant theology, in two very distinct ways. These have radically different results for broader creation. I would argue that this fractured understanding and application points to the need for greater input from both normative theology in the form of pastoral teaching and formal theology in the form of further academic attention.

How anthropocentrism can marginalise concern for non-human creation can be seen in numerous ways. For conservative evangelicals, a starting point would be how respondents study the Bible. For instance biblical study and reading was centrally focused upon what the Scriptures spoke about human-God relationships and human-human relationships. This is understandable as the 'Two Great Commandments of the Law' (Matthew 22:36-40) focus on human-God and human-human relationships. This was evidenced as the overarching theme in sermons presented throughout the course of research, with no sermons having a focus upon human relationships to non-human creation. It was also mentioned in the following interview extract:

I think my focus upon the Bible, when I am reading the Bible, it's very much on humans, human-God and human-human relationships, so I have to say when I am reading the Bible, I am always trying to apply it to myself, the way I deal with other people. I have not really applied it much beyond that such as thinking about animals (Gary, aged 43, CH2:INT4).

In this instance it can be ascertained that the 'feeding' of congregants via normative theology leads to issues about broader creation being somewhat neglected: both on a personal (private study) and corporate (pastoral/church teaching) level. Yet even Scriptures that include references to non-human creation such as to do with 'God caring for the sparrows of the air, how much more for us'

reinforce God seeing human creation far above other life forms and therefore superior, yet equally that they are not unimportant and God still cares for them (CH2:INT4,CH1:INT8). In this sense interviewees clearly articulate anthropocentric viewpoints, though some clarify this in as much as that this human prioritising does not have to negate genuine care for other life forms.

When Jesus said he cares for even the birds, and He cares much more for us, and I think as a Christian we should try and reflect that. It's important to see that Jesus made that distinction. He says that we are worth more than those, so I think it's always people first, but we should also care for creation (Michael, aged 18, CH2:INT5).

In this sense for evangelical Christians, their care or compassionate concern is always primarily focused upon humans with non-human creation as a secondary issue. Interviews expressed this in terms of a hierarchical structure in how they prioritised their time and finances, and how these decisions were often permeated by an anthropocentrism which blocked concern for broader creation. One interviewee who had previously supported the WWF admitted that she had stopped after thinking more deeply about how she should prioritise her resources as a Christian, concluding that 'people do have priority obviously' and had become more involved with children's charities instead (CH4:INT4). It could be seen as a further example of the regulative principle embedded within normative theology, in that it draws people back to certain ways of seeing the world and doing things. This was expressed in a strong 'humans first' way of thinking. One respondent expressed a deep distaste to hearing about large amounts of money being left in wills to charities supporting the welfare of animals. He saw this as an outrage, when hospices caring for people needed funding and street children around the world were going starving and it was likened to a form of madness (CH1:INT3). This line of argument could be seen as dichotomous, that we either think about humans or non-humans, and that the former should always take priority. This more radical anthropocentrism clearly can lead to the nullifying of concern for non-human causes. It seems to be one of the downsides of anthropocentrism that it can result in polarisation of thinking; that humans are what is important and so command all peoples' resources leaving nothing left for non-human creation. In terms of the four voices of analysis, I would suggest that the normative understanding is that humans are superior but should still care for non-human creation and that this becomes an espoused theology. Yet with some individuals, operant theology does not reflect this and can be expressed in such dichotomous terms that the issue is whether to help humans (which is seen as good) or instead non-human creation (which is seen as bad). In this sense a more radical operant theology blocks a normative understanding that humans matter most but care should still be expressed for non-human creation. The reaction of John articulates these points:

I would rather see my money being used for bringing people to Christ or other charitable things that look after people. When I see like a suffering animal, take the pandas for instance, I think they are a nonsense, millions and billions of pounds have been put into pandas [...] I would rather see that money be put into children that are being sexually abused and trafficked, to be put into children who are suffering wherever [...] I don't see how anyone could stand there, see a dying child and say right this money isn't going to save a dying child but a panda (John, aged 34, CH1:INT3).

The issue of human welfare leads to highly charged emotions and from this one quotation it can be seen how this kind of comparing can push people into purely anthropocentric thinking. It also points to how evangelical Christians could hold negative views toward the environmental movement, which could be seen as channelling resources away from human needs. This dichotomous reasoning of only being able to choose one or the other was expressed by others, comparing the folly of protecting animals when people are starving to death (CH4:INT4) or that environmental themes in general should not figure too greatly in peoples' hearts and minds whilst the hunger of human beings was a problem (CH2:INT5).

Others, although prioritising human needs, still expressed a view that in an ideal world they would support all aspects of creation not just human, but finances dictated what they could practically do.

To a degree, and as much as I love creation, and I love nature, I love animals, but sometimes a person's finances dictate that they can't do both, such as supporting the natural environment and animals or say Christians being persecuted or the poor, well I believe Christians then have a duty to supporting their own (Terry, aged 59, CH4:INT5).

Again, this points to the fact that there is still a real or at least theoretical care for non-human creation, but humans, and in this instance other Christians with needs, are given priority. Finances dictated human prioritisation for others also, who clearly stated how they do care for animals and the rest of creation, and would sign petitions for instance to help save endangered species, but when it came to financially giving, it 'felt right' to give to charities prioritising human needs, and likewise perhaps an uncomfortable feeling supporting animal charities, that it was not justifiable to prioritise the latter (CH3:INT9). This kind of reasoning can lead to an espoused and operant position in that until the world's human woes have been solved, we should not look to non-human concerns. Environmental concern can easily become a luxury that can never be afforded. This can feed back into the four voices model of analysis in that a person's personal life circumstances or financial

status can add a complicating factor to interpretation of normative theology, and espoused and operant responses can be heavily infused with 'non-theological' drives. In particular, financial issues can result in the hierarchy of concerns for conservative evangelicals only being implemented for those issues at the top, whereas those lower down, can end up gaining no attention.

For evangelicals, creation is 'all we see around us, with man being the highest type of creation' and in these terms anthropocentrism can be positively linked to stewardship (CH1:INT5). Humanity is seen as central for God, not just in salvific terms, but also in terms of responsibility, being above the rest of the created order, therefore being the instrument God has put in place to manage the environment (CH1:INT5). That anthropocentrism is clearly linked to dominion is one way in which human superiority can still lead to the exercising of stewardship for other creatures, and this link was noted in 17 interviews. This can also be seen in broader society as the traditional conservation movement is based upon human ability to manage other life forms, and therefore starting from anthropocentric roots. In this sense biblical anthropocentrism can lead to a responsible level of care for creation amongst some interviewees. It is also an example of how normative teachings (anthropocentrism and stewardship) can work together in a harmonious and self-reinforcing way for positive good. Formal theology also notes the close association between humans being the apex and centre of God's creation, bearing His image, and the responsibility for wise dominion and rule (Ferguson, 1987, p.30-31).

From scriptural interpretation, a striking indicator of anthropocentrism is the way interviewees view animals and these themes have been brought together in Table 8. This shows how normative theology (Scriptures), very precisely shapes conservative evangelical attitudes towards animals, with resultant anthropocentrism.

TABLE 9: THE THEOLOGY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVANGELICALS AND ANIMALS

God created humans above the animals: All life forms are not all equal
God gave humans authority over animals
Only humans have an eternal soul and partake in salvation (though some animals will inhabit the new earth)
All creation praises God including animals
All creation declared good by God including animals
Animals given to humans as a resource for food
Evangelical Christians should be against animal cruelty and their unnecessary suffering
Humans responsible for the wise stewardship of animals
Animals can be utilised as pets or for work purposes
The rights of animals should not rise too highly in relation to human needs which should be prioritised
Creation mandate for humans to fill and subdue the earth
God upholds all life forms, human and animals

Themes with strong anthropocentric undercurrents include animals being given as a resource by God to humans for food (CH3:INT5, CH2:INT1). Humans have a soul and are therefore created differently by God, whereas animals do not (CH3:INT5). Furthermore, God made the world fruitful, to satisfy human needs, that ‘He created everything for our benefit’, and in this respect using animals for medical research was also justified in terms of the human benefits that could entail (CH3:INT5). Anthropocentrism permeates strongly from such reasoning, with creation bearing an almost slave-like bondage in solely living to serve human needs. Yet this servanthood of creation to humanity is also understood in terms of a right that results in a profound responsibility: namely that of good stewardship of those resources (CH3:INT6).

The conservative evangelical position is understood in being able to use creation, such as animals for food, and land for farming, but this to be permeated by a care, a husbandry or wise use that minimises suffering and rules out abuse of animals (CH2:INT9). Here a normative understanding of being able to ‘utilise animals as a resource’ is coupled with a ‘responsibility to still care and minimise suffering’. Both themes have biblical roots and are therefore another instance of normative theologies working together resulting in an espoused and operant stance of care. This caring approach was expressed by others, drawing in other biblical teachings such as ‘loving your neighbour’ not necessarily just in terms of human relationships, but that this could be stretched to

the animal kingdom, though perhaps most conservative evangelicals would not stretch this so far, and that we should be kind and thoughtful to them, and more specifically not to strike them or overload them when being used for work (CH2:INT7, CH4:INT10) and that in the OT you had to pay compensation for killing or injuring another person's oxen (CH4:INT5).

When pushed with probing into whether it was possible for non-human creation to have an independent value free from a valuation in terms of human benefits, such as intrinsic worth, this was met with confusion and an inability to comprehend, as though the only way for humans to see non-human creation is through their anthropocentric lens (CH3:INT3). However, I would also add that intrinsic worth can be a difficult philosophical concept to grasp, without having given it prior thought. The way secular environmental ethics deliberates the question of the intrinsic worth of non-human creation and a re-positioning of human and non-human relationships in more egalitarian ways is something that I would suggest would be hard to gain any momentum with conservative evangelicals as it does not have a clear biblical normative justification.<sup>76</sup> For others, a highly charged anthropocentric platform gives non-human creation a value only in as much as it is connected to some human good (CH3:INT1). In this instance, normative teachings such as humans being made in the image of God and having souls, coupled with creation being a gift of God for human use, is interpreted into an espoused stance that creation has no intrinsic worth. However, I would ask the question as to whether these normative teachings alone are enough to block out the possibility of any intrinsic worth of non-human creation? Further normative teachings could reinforce notions of intrinsic worth for non-human creation, such as the decentring of human superiority in the Book of Job and creation being declared good by God before humans are created, in Genesis 1: 20-25. The issue of intrinsic worth is I believe another example of how further mining of normative theology and the input of formal theology could be fruitful and helpful. Perhaps the fear from conservative evangelicals is that intrinsic worth leads toward notions of equality between different lifeforms, which would run against normative biblical teachings, but I would argue that having intrinsic worth does not have to equate to other life forms being equal to humans, contrary to what broader environmentalism might suggest.

---

<sup>76</sup> For an overview of anthropocentric and alternative ways for humans to view the environment, see Joseph Des Jardin (2001), Chapters 5 and 7.

Interviewees revealed several ways in which conservative evangelical Christians were ‘wary’ in some way of environmentalism and many of these overlap. Most important was how evangelicals saw environmentalism as ‘extremist’. This can be seen in the context of elevating environmental concerns above and beyond what it was deemed to be required from a normative understanding of biblical stewardship (CH3:INT10). For conservative evangelicals, God’s commands to steward and fill the earth do not conflict but environmentalism aims to go further in elevating non-human concerns so they would conflict with human concerns and God’s purposes for the earth. In effect, this would turn upside down the anthropocentrism so strongly highlighted in the previous section. For instance, as environmental interest groups and environmental ethicists talk about things such as biocentrism and ecocentrism, or more generally humans being a part of creation rather than above it: for evangelicals this is something to be resisted.<sup>77</sup> Seeing all life forms as equal instead of the biblical order with man at the top made some wary of environmentalism (CH3:INT3).

Although normative theology may not teach explicitly about ‘environmentalism’, it is clear that several normative teachings create a tension or discord between conservative evangelicalism and environmentalism when the two are brought together. This is a further example of how normative theology acts as a thermostat, as biblical themes are drawn upon that warn or steer conservative evangelicals away from a path that does not match up to biblical teachings. The following table shows the main reasons given by evangelicals for resisting environmentalism and each of these themes are triggered by a normative understanding which results in an espoused theology that ‘something is not right’ with environmentalism and an operant theology of resistance.

---

<sup>77</sup> See previous footnote.

TABLE 10: REASONS FOR NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD ENVIRONMENTALISM FROM EVANGELICALS

Evangelical attitudes toward Environmentalism	Interview Count
Can be Extremist	16
A Distraction for Evangelicals	8
Sceptical of Claims	5
Pantheistic Fear	5
Exaggerate Situation (Alarmist)	5
Anti-human Sentiments	4
Have Unrealistic Utopia	3
General Suspicion	3
Alternative Apocalypse	2
Create Guilt	1

The environmental movement more broadly was seen as a secular organisation with no real Christian voice within it (CH2:INT4). Some thought this a shame that there were not more Christians involved, and that they were doing a good job in raising awareness (CH3:INT1) but perhaps missing a trick in ‘dealing with the destruction of creation, one or two levels further down than required’, rather than a heart or sin issue needing to be addressed (CH2:INT4). Others acknowledged the possibility of fear amongst evangelicals:

I have not been involved in any conservation organisations: I think there is a bit of fear in us isn’t there. I suppose as evangelical Christians, some of these societies that are set up to maintain these things, tend to be quite anti-Christian, which is a shame really you know (Edith, aged 73, CH1:INT5).

Here, the shame being that although doing good in protecting the environment the world-view of some environmental organisations is incompatible with that of evangelical Christianity. With hope being a central feature of normative theology, anything that engenders fear amongst conservative evangelicals, will be resisted. The distinction is made between those which are ‘great societies such as the RSPB’ and more extremist environmentalists in groups such as Greenpeace (CH1:INT5). One church leader expressed his reservations about being ‘misread’ by others if he approached the topic:

The hesitation I would have is that people might misread what I am doing, because their agenda [*environmentalists*] seems to be coming from a particular view-point that is contrary



to Christianity, there is a suspicion of it. Now that is not a good excuse for a minister, because we have to say what the Bible teaches, so I don't think that holds a lot of water, but if I am honest, that would be my hesitation and I would be cautious about how I approached it (Mark, aged 38, CH3:INT10).

Here a great insight is also provided into church engagement or lack thereof with environmental issues which will be addressed in the next section. Because generally the environmental movement espouses a world-view contrary to Christian doctrines, even if they promote in some respects a stewardship which Christians should themselves address, there is fear of being seen to be something you are not, which leads to a lacklustre engagement. So although stewarding the environment in many instances is seen as 'good' because the environmental movement is known to be not rooted in the Bible, they are seen as biblically adrift and in conflict with normative theology. Then what happens for some conservative evangelicals is that they refuse to engage with actions that are deemed to have non-normative (or even anti-normative) roots. Therefore espoused and operant theology can be one of resistance. Such beliefs that Christians would find intolerable were expressed as follows:

I would not be comfortable supporting the kind of groups that are almost New Age in their philosophy. Essentially they are saying the world would be better off if people weren't here, that nature and creation should always take priority over humans (Andrew, aged 31, CH2:INT2).

In combination with an alternative spirituality, such as New Age, more extreme environmentalism is seen as turning biblical teaching about humanity on its head: that they are not the most important of God's creation, only the most damaging, and rather than needing to be good stewards, they just need to be cut down seriously in numbers.

They disregard the Creator, and prioritise things in an unbiblical order. Some of their concerns might be good and right, but the reasons for them are wrong. You have extreme people talking almost as if we shouldn't be here, hurting and raping the earth. They may be addressing legitimate problems, but eliminating mankind from the earth is not the answer (Chris, age 37, CH4:INT10).

Other words that crop up leading to fear are 'pagan' with environmentalists going back to a pre-Christian idea of nature and 'pantheistic' in seeing nature as God rather than being created by Him (CH2:INT2). Environmentalism can be seen by conservative evangelicals as prescribing the wrong solutions which go against normative teachings. These can then result in a strong emotional

response from conservative evangelicals as they see unbelievers action's rooted in non-normative drives, whereas conservative evangelicals see the Bible as giving them a deeper insight. Another church leader stated:

Surely we are to care for the creatures of the Lord around us, as He does, but we don't worship them as we see some do [*environmentalists*], we see them hugging trees, turn them into God and so on, all this New Age stuff and we have got to be very careful we don't do that, you know like with pantheism, that is very important isn't it because God is apart from the world, separate from nature (Matthew, aged 69, CH4:INT9).

Here there is an evangelical delineation between 'caring' for creation, which is good, to slipping further into 'worshipping' and 'seeing God as' creation, which is a dangerous step too far. It is just another aspect of how evangelicals see environmental groups as protecting nature from the wrong spiritual point of view (CH4:INT8). Here, alternative spiritual beliefs create an obvious discord with normative theology and formal theology also warns of the incorrect view of God and creation as seen in pantheism (Berkhof, 1966, p.132,134). Another expressed that it was good Christians were moving beyond the idea of dismissing earth stewardship as earth worship and that we do not have to make it a religion in itself as they do, but grow our own authentic biblical voice (CH4:INT10), or to steward creation for the right normative reasons.

To get their agenda put forward more strongly, evangelicals sometimes see environmentalists as 'scare mongering' as having a great deal of influence with the media that society is then bombarded with, generating a fear, to get them to talk about it all the time, ultimately to follow their own agenda (CH2:INT5). Forcefully putting forward their agenda is also seen as wrong by evangelicals in terms of law breaking and violence or sabotage that is sometimes employed by environmental activists (CH3:INT1). Again, environmentalism creates normative dissonance with conservative evangelicals who in the main wish to adhere to the law.

Environmentalists were seen to slip into beliefs and ways of thinking that Christians are specifically warned about in the Bible. Another church minister expressed this as he saw them being 'taken up with the creation to a point of ignoring the Creator' as he saw the book of Romans warning us against, and that this was a danger for any Christians becoming too involved with the issue (CH2:INT6). As previously stated in Chapter 5, the idea is a warning about enjoying the creation without acknowledging the Creator. Environmentalists are seen as wanting to protect creation as an end in itself, whereas the evangelical position is more to respect creation and care for it only in so much as it reveals the greatness, glory and majesty of the Creator (CH2:INT6). Perhaps these reasons

show why, as some interviewees pointed out, environmental engagement is a bit of a strange conundrum for conservative evangelicals or ‘an odd thing’, as historically Christians have been leaders on many social issues, from the abolition of slavery, to improved conditions for workers, to health care and so on, but not so with the environment<sup>78</sup> (CH1:INT3, CH4:INT6). Here again the seemingly misplaced reasoning of environmentalists seeing humanity as the problem that needs eradicating is expressed as a central reason for a lack of Christian leadership and engagement with the issue (CH1:INT3). I would argue that what is evident is the need to draw out an authentic position for conservative evangelicals based upon a clear understanding of normative theology and contemporary environmental issues with the input of formal theology, rather than let fear of a lack of biblical understanding noted in others, effectively block engagement. The former would allow a positive espoused and operant stance whereas the latter allows normative drives to result in a retreat.

Some interviewees saw a value in organisations that they were involved with, as members, in caring for historic buildings, gardens and surrounding land which they owned, and were appreciative of their efforts to conserve (CH3:INT10, CH2:INT9), more specifically the work of the National Trust in protecting areas of outstanding beauty in Snowdonia (CH2:INT9). They were therefore seen as important in supporting their work in environmental protection as well as benefits of being able to visit nice places as members. Such organisations, in addition to others such as the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW) and the Woodland Trust (WT), were seen as more sensible organisations that are not too extreme and it therefore being a good thing for Christians to support them (CH1:INT8, CH2:INT2). This positive engagement (operant theology) largely results from the support of such groups not resulting in any normative discord, but rather more harmoniously incorporates a biblical understanding of human use and management of creation.

An overview of attitudes toward stewardship organisations can be seen in the following table:

---

<sup>78</sup> Although some Christian groups have promoted Christian engagement with environmental concerns for a number of decades, such as *A Rocha* for instance, very little knowledge or awareness of such groups was evidenced by interviewees.

TABLE 11: EVANGELICALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP ORGANISATIONS

Organisation	Interview Count	Positive Endorsement	Members/Active Supporters	Previously Supporters	Reservations
RSPB	8	8	4	2	0
Greenpeace	6	2 Anti-whaling	0	0	4 Extremist, law breaking, anti- Christian
National Trust	3	3	2	1	0
CADW	2	1	1	0	0
Green Party	3	1 Possible for Christians to be members.	0	0	1 Wrong priorities
WWF	3	3	0	2	0
Tearfund	2	1	0	0	1 Not evangelising
Friends of the Earth	2	1	0	0	1 Promote homosex- uality
CPRW	1	1	0	1	0
Woodland Trust	1	1	1	0	0
Wildfowl and Wetland Trust	1	1	1	0	0
New Hope (Kenya)	1	1	1	0	0

Some aspects of environmental protection were seen as extremist or just unnecessary or misplaced, again creating a normative discord and resistance. This surfaced in answers that were matched with smiles or chuckles such as ‘I have not been out with placards saying “save the caterpillar” ’ (CH2:INT6). No doubt environmentalists who campaign on such issues would be seen as dangerously misguided, saving tiny aspects of a vibrant and diverse creation with no thought to the fact that they were not yet spiritually ‘saved’ themselves. The Green Party and Greenpeace in particular were described as being people who ‘miss the point’, thinking what they do is the priority when it is not, marginalising human concerns (CH4:INT8). Others perhaps saw organisations such as

Greenpeace as the face of environmentalism causing a bias in their mind toward other groups, that their activities in some way were 'naughty' and that they were not Christian (CH3:INT2).

Some interviewees were probed with the question as to whether they thought it was a good idea to have specifically Christian stewardship organisations rather than secular groups which protect the environment. Answers were very mixed, with those both for and against claiming normative roots to their position; again showing how when presented with an idea which is in some ways novel to church practice with no prior explicit teaching, respondents make their own connections to normative theology to articulate their operant position. Some affirmed the idea:

We certainly need a voice to make us stronger than we are at the moment. We seem to take a back seat and not do anything, I don't think it's right (Rupert, aged 79, CH3:INT5).

The respondent went on to explain that a Christian would have a different world-view, and look after 'God's world' rather than promoting environmental protection for their own ends (CH3:INT5). Whilst another thought they would be a good idea to promote a biblical perspective as long as they could still incorporate scientific research and findings into their arguments as this would be needed to be taken seriously at a governmental level (CH1:INT8). That there 'was a strong case to be made for such organisations and that they should be supported', pointing to how the Christian organisation Tearfund, have improved human conditions in other countries (CH2:INT3). Another expressed the opposite view:

Maybe I am a bit naïve, but I would have thought any thinking Christian would know that it is not necessarily a good idea to go setting up organisations to try and save the planet in any form, shape, whatsoever. Because it is not going to happen, so it would be a waste of energy and time and better things to do (Emma, aged 60, CH4:INT4).

Here, it seems helping 'save the planet' is futile, perhaps in the face of eschatological certainties: that this world will not last. Others saw such an idea as having a Christian environmental organisation as something of a folly and even an unnecessary threat to the Christian gospel (CH4:INT8, CH4:INT3, CH4:INT4).

Others expressed that Christians had a truer picture of the future in that no amount of effort would lead to what 'the world', secular society, desires as the end goal: a perfection of the environment. Here, she believes environmentalism promoted an unrealistic utopia 'that was not going to happen'. But that Christians could be involved for different reasons such as more broadly alleviating present suffering (CH1:INT5). Divergent themes between evangelical Christians and environmentalists were noted by others. From an evangelical perspective, since 'the Fall' the natural

world has been in decay, under the effects of sin, crying out for release from this bondage, something that humanity has no power to resolve. Whereas mainstream environmentalism may suggest we can make things better, and create a kind of utopia,<sup>79</sup> evangelical eschatology deems things will only get better when this earth passes away and a new one is created. The world-views of normative evangelical theology and environmentalism fracture on this point.

The Christian view is small I suppose in the world, I can't see that the earth is going to develop into some kind of utopia, you know if you do *this this* and *this*, as you do hear people saying, that is the answer to everything- it's not the answer to everything because inside man there is always going to be that sinful nature isn't there [...] therefore there is never going to be a utopia where however well I look after the environment and the animals, all those things, we are never going to reach utopia [...] that will only come in whatever way God does it (Edith, aged 73, CH1:INT5).

The focus is upon the normatively taught biblical utopia that God has planned, something already set in stone. In this sense, there is seen to be an element of futility in creating our own ideal worlds based upon other philosophies, something which can again lead to inaction. Furthermore, it could lead to an acceptance of living with the way things are rather than engaging to try and halt degradation or help restore or rejuvenate spoiled environments. One male respondent noted:

It's a fallen world and how I view the environment is based in the Scriptures: that the world will come to an end one day, the Scripture teaches quite clearly and as an evangelical Christian I believe it's crying out, because all it knows is death and decay. Whilst we are to endeavour to make the most of the world we live in now, but like there some environmentalists who are not Christians who believe we can make the world better, I find nothing in Scripture that teaches that (Terry, aged 59, CH4:INT5).

It is not easy to decipher the place of formal theology in this section on environmentalism as no interviewees mentioned formal theology to back up their answers. In one sense formal theology would reinforce normative teaching in relation to biblical themes that are then brought into the environmental debate. Yet very few of the conservative evangelical formal theologians mentioned in Chapter 4 have written explicitly about the environment; yet a restraining influence can be seen in Wayne Grudem's (2010) *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for*

---

<sup>79</sup> See Ernest Callenbach's novel 'Ecotopia' (1990), as the title suggests, for a glimpse into a society many aspects of which would live up to an environmentalist's utopia, yet at the same time this representation is something far removed from an ideal evangelical Christian community.

*Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* and a more engaging position is evident in Richard Bauckham's (2010) *Bible and Ecology* and more generally in the career of John Stott.

The world-view of evangelical Christians and environmentalists collide at numerous points and therefore the general fear of environmentalism, amongst other differences, represents a tangible fracture point on the meaningful desire and ability for conservative evangelicals to engage with issues that in many ways environmentalists take the lead on presently and have also done so historically. Secular environmentalism is often resisted by conservative evangelicals due to dissonance with normative theology. This can end up with the attitude that environmental stewardship is something environmentalists elevate too highly as their primary goal in life whereas it is not something the church takes seriously.

#### 6:9 INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENT VERSUS CORPORATE DISENGAGEMENT

---

From participant observation at several different churches during over a year, it can be concluded that environmental stewardship does not form part of conservative evangelicals' corporate activities or worship. From the numerous outreach and evangelising activities to preaching and teaching, through to the books and pamphlets promoted and used by churches, there was never anything that had explicit teaching about caring for creation. This was also the same for preaching during Sunday services, and mid-week Bible studies, and extra activities such as men's or women's meetings. Even in corporate prayer, although acknowledging God as Creator and the wonder of creation and that God sustains this and provides our needs through creation, there was never any mention that we have a responsibility toward creation and that environmental problems need tackling or that evangelicals as God's agents have a role in this. Likewise the same was noted for the content of hymns sung in services. This was also evident attending special presentations on creationism and the week long Christian conference in Aberystwyth. However, on a personal, individual or family level, congregants were involved in different things that could be deemed to be in the field of environmental stewardship. The fact that explicit references to stewardship have not yet broken through to mainstream conservative evangelical normative corporate teaching or espoused and operant practice therefore adds another tension for conservative evangelicals in as much as that to practise stewardship is to exercise double cognitive dissonance or that which is not preached; something they are not taught about from the pulpit. This adds difficulty for the authentic living out of dominion concepts. For instance, conservative evangelicals know there are more important issues they are told they should focus upon, which gain corporate attention, and also a fear may exist of

being seen by contemporaries of caring too much for what is seen as a peripheral issue which is not due mainstream attention. In terms of the four voices theory of analysis, no normative pastoral teaching or church declarations focusing upon creation care or any official espoused church position, understandably can result in operant engagement being more difficult and is a further area where a call for more formal theological input would be helpful.

Interviewing gave the opportunity to follow up on these observations in an attempt to try and understand and explain why the described situation was so. During the latter sections of interviewing church congregants and leaders were asked 'Do you think there is a place for evangelical Christians, either corporately as a church, or as individuals and families, to be involved with issues relating to creation such as environmental stewardship?' Most responses were in favour of this being a personal choice for individuals to make rather than coming under the remit of the church as a whole, as the following member replied:

I think it is fine as individuals, but I can't see it as one of the chief responsibilities of the gathered church. Yes, in so far as the church building and immediate environment, conserving this, looking after it in that way. But I think we have responsibilities that are specifically ours as a gathered church, and I would not put environmental stewardship within that list (Gladys, aged 83, CH2:INT9).

Here, no doubt these specific responsibilities of the gathered church would have strong normative drives, such as primarily evangelism. Some saw an 'absolute and certain' responsibility for individual evangelicals (CH2:INT7) or that 'every person should have a role to play' in how they live their lives but it was not a corporate issue that evangelicals as groups should address (CH4:INT8). Others saw it as something 'for people who particularly have a burden' to express themselves, but not something the church as a whole should incorporate. The reasons given being that the gospel is the church's real focus and what matters and that we should 'keep our eyes firmly on the glory and the new heaven and earth' (CH4:INT9). In this way evangelicals can literally have only a part of their conscious being 'on earth' and instead focus on heaven and the things they believe God has in store for the future, and this is also reiterated in formal theology (Ferguson, 1981, pp.16-19). In theory, this is thought of as not neglecting the world but neither being caught up too much in its concerns (CH4:INT9). It appears that the lack of a clearly thought out normative position leads to a dissonance between congregants espoused positions as a corporate body and their more engaging espoused positions on an individual level. The lack of a normative theological corporate engagement leads to a neglect of what in creation care could be deemed as an important aspect of Christian lifestyles as



one interviewee postulated the view that it could be incorporated in this way (CH2:INT7). However, generally views were far more restrictive when corporate engagement was suggested:

CC: Would you see this as corporately as well as individually?

RESP: I do not think the church exists as a political organisation: that is not its mandate. The church's mandate is to go into the world and make disciples and baptising them, teaching them all Christ's commandments (Andrew, aged 31, CH2:INT2).

This respondent makes a clear demarcation in what a Christian does in their private life and what the church of Christ does corporately: namely that as individuals, we can be involved in all areas of life, including environmental stewardship, but this does not come under the churches' remit.

Another church leader's lack of enthusiasm for environmental stewardship as an expression of the gathered church was summed up in the following response:

It is not the mission of the church to worry about the environment. There's certainly a danger, as with many other social issues, when you make a secondary issue your calling card, you have an agenda and campaign on this. Ecological concern is not a platform the church should get involved in (Chris, aged 37, CH4:INT10).

The reasoning went on that there were far greater more pressing issues and that he could not think of a reason why a particular church needed specific teaching on ecological concern. Feeding such an espoused theology is complex normative theology with multiple roots. Although again acting as a thermostat, in which the respondent presents an argument to keep the 'church in line', in this instance it is a position that could be equally challenged with alternative interpretations with normative theological roots. Another stated firmly that environmental stewardship was an individual responsibility and expressed feelings of uneasiness with the suggestion it could be incorporated within the church, being a threat to 'the gospel' (CH4:INT3).

The hierarchical structure of conservative evangelical churches was another reason given by interviewees why stewardship should be a personal rather than a corporate affair. Church pastors are seen as being responsible in many ways for the souls and spiritual health of congregants, when 'opening up God's Word', when giving church sermons that God is literally using the minister to speak to church members. This could be in areas such as teaching, rebuking and edifying and is a position backed up by formal theology (Packer, 2003, p.99-100) and specifically in the congregants duty in 'responding to the Word' (Stott, 1992, Ch. 11. pp.173-185). Because pastors are seen as 'above' members there is a tendency to accept and respect rather than challenge their authority, as

to challenge would go against further normative (Bible) teachings of the importance of obedience and submission (Hebrews 13: 17-19). Many congregants would therefore feel uncomfortable in expressing views that challenged this authority which they see God as having put in place. This was noted in numerous interviews: for instance when asked about teaching or lack thereof about creation in church, responses were silent and hesitant, some even suggesting they received enough teaching about the topic when participant observation confirmed that there were none in over a year of fieldwork. However, on a small number of occasions a more direct challenge was observed. One congregant noted that he had barely ever heard Genesis preached, or anything taught about creation. Wording himself carefully he perhaps saw the problem as a lack of pastoral knowledge on the topic of creation, not giving it the attention it deserved (CH4:INT7). Another was more cutting with his criticism of how ministers were duty bound to 'preach the whole counsel of God', which should include dominion responsibilities:

If we are going to preach the whole counsel of God, which as evangelical Christian preachers they should be, the whole counsel of God covers Genesis right through to Revelation. It includes all our responsibilities toward creation, as well as to souls, to salvation. This is where God has put us to be. If we neglect our environment, the earth, we are just depriving others of possibly food [...] I think it is important Christians are taught they are responsible (Terry, aged 59, CH4:INT5).

The respondent went on to add that he had heard very little in church, in the Reformed circles he moves in, about creation. As the interviewee's confidence grew he offered a warning to ministers in relation to neglecting to teach about creation and stewardship rather than just the gospel:

True ministers of the gospel will be held to account to the Lord, when He returns and asks why they have not preached the whole counsel of God because God has commanded them to preach it, to feed My sheep, and that feeding my sheep is to preach the gospel and teach the whole counsel of God (Terry, aged 59, CH4:INT5).

In many ways for conservative evangelicals to be involved explicitly with creation stewardship can be a challenge to orthodoxy or 'normativity'. The fact that creation stewardship is not a visible part of church life, and that church hierarchical structure is such that it would be difficult for things to change, can lead to fractures in the development of espoused and operant environmental stewardship concepts. For instance, there can be a general fear and inability to do anything which can be seen as stepping out of the norm, and that churches or groups of congregants are self-reinforcing organisms where certain beliefs, ideas and practices are established and

maintained. One interviewee described this in terms of 'tribalistic' notions and how it would amount to a quantum shift, just by 'coming out' as wanting to address environmental concerns such as climate change. For instance, this could lead to someone being at odds with contemporaries and could explain why others, not having the courage needed to be different, would just continue with a more apathetic attitude toward the environment (CH2:INT4). In relating these insights into 'group culture' to the four voices of theology it can be noted that operant theologies of members of a group can be reinforced and maintained and self-perpetuated as a 'standard response' or belief within the group. It is possible that such operant group theologies could be perpetuated by the group itself rather than having a continual normative root which is feeding it. This also prevents any adequate 'space' for alternative operant or espoused theologies to be expressed and the curtailing of freedom of movement or expression in relation to the environment. Change would be difficult and slow and could possibly only come about as a gradual repositioning approached a critical mass.

A church leader commented in relation to teaching about creation care as part of his leadership responsibility, that in effect he could teach the general principle but had no right to tell people what kind of lifestyles they should lead:

If I was preaching the early chapters of Genesis I would want to make it clear that we have stewardship responsibilities, the problem is how do you spell that out specifically? I do not think I would be in a position to say that. I think I would be in a position to teach the principle but I couldn't then go on and say if you have a car bigger than a 1.6 you need to get rid of it, I have no right to say that [...] I would teach the general principle and leave it up to members of the congregation to work the details out for themselves (Luke, aged 47, CH2:INT6).

Here the prospect of teaching on stewardship as being inherently difficult in that the Bible teaches general stewardship responsibilities but the question of how to spell that out specifically was problematic (CH2:INT6). He therefore thought it wise for him to teach the general principle of stewardship but not to criticise specific lifestyle choices of congregants as not 'environmentally friendly' as this was seen as going beyond his remit as their spiritual teacher (CH2:INT6). So in a sense, it was one thing to teach a principle but applying that to our own context in the twenty-first century was less clear, and it was up to individual members 'to work that out for themselves' (CH2:INT6). In relation to the four voices, this example clearly shows the tensions and difficulties involved with the application (operant theology) of normative teachings that were not written in contemporary times and lack specific details. Addressing such an example as the environment via normative theology, in any specific detail, can be hermeneutically problematic. This leads to the

question as to whether or not on some occasions an operant theological response is needed which goes beyond the remit prescribed within official and historic normative church teaching, and would be a specific arena where formal theology could be utilised.

The fact that there is no teaching about environmental stewardship in the churches studied led to some people making the point that the stewardship evident in their personal lives was not connected to their Christian identity. For instance, a family with a specific interest in how they act as stewards in their daily lives, their impact upon the environment, explained it as exercising something 'beyond their evangelical Christianity' and that it would be something they would do regardless of whether they were a Christian or not (CH2:INT4). They had not connected the two together, with any specific verses for instance and that they did not see stewardship as featuring much at all in church life, but rather exercising it in a way non-Christians would do (CH2:INT4). In this example creation care is engaged with as something above and beyond having normative theological roots or independent of any normative theological inputs.

For another congregant the 'difficulty' in stewardship was more of a problem of modernity and large populations to support: that going back historically to times before the New Testament the earth was sparsely populated, but as numbers increased there was more of a deleterious impact upon the environment. In this sense the biblical mandate of dominion in Genesis was given at a far easier time with regards to the broader environment's health (CH3:INT1). It does not always contain the details necessary for responding to more striking problems in the contemporary world, although part of this problem could be limited human wisdom and insight. There is therefore a lack of clearly defined normative teaching, and it is hard in a way for detailed application to be made from Scripture to address new situations and problems, such as environmental stresses. This point could be central in that conservative evangelicals place great authority on the Bible now and forever, perhaps a Bible that does not promote a definite and detailed teaching on environmental protection that can easily be gained from a clear exegesis. Perhaps being so strongly conservative in nature, there is a great hesitation to applying other sources of teaching to complement this one book, or an aversion to other disciplines which form the second part of formal theology as laid out by Cameron *et al.* (2010).

## 6:10 CONCLUSION

---

The use of the modified four voices model of theological reflection as an analytical template has helped with the presentation of data in this chapter such as in articulating cause and effect relationships within the data, as well as feeding back important findings about the model's more

detailed internal workings and these themes are now drawn together in conclusion. From the initial starting point of the appreciation of creation outlined in Chapter 5 as a vibrant and positive espoused and operant theology, it might be surmised that a logical espoused and operant theological progression would lead to a desire to protect the environment, a keen awareness of environmental issues and the incorporation of this into conservative evangelicals' individual and corporate practice. However, with my own data, I have offered an understanding of why this is not as straightforward a progression as might be expected.

In Chapter 6 I have identified eight distinct themes that conservative evangelicals negotiate when espousing a biblical response to the environment, all strongly related to normative theological interpretations. Specifically, four of these are what I termed the 'evangelical environmental quadrilateral of doctrines': the Fall, dominion and regeneration, evangelism and the gospel, and eschatology. The additional four themes are notions of God's sovereignty, anthropocentrism, attitudes toward environmentalism and differences between corporate and individual engagement with environmental stewardship. I therefore challenge the overly simplistic reasoning of many previous empirical studies that claimed only one reason for the link between Christian religious beliefs and levels of environmental concern. I have shown how these eight precursors represent a complex and multidimensional set of themes that are evident in conservative evangelical interpretation of normative theology in their espoused positions.

Although seeing great beauty in creation, the effects of the Fall and sin upon broader creation and not just humans, result in conservative evangelicals viewing creation through a 'lens of imperfection': that the environment cannot be 'put right' by any amount of human intervention, but only by God at the End Times, in a broader eschatological sense. The normative church teachings of the effects of 'the Fall' combined with the nature of eschatological certainties—that this world will not last—can for some, cast a shadow over the potential for authentic espoused and operant engagement with environmental protection. For conservative evangelicals it is therefore not environmentalists that usher in a new utopia for creation, but rather a sovereign God, who will create a new heaven and earth at some future point in time. Unbelievers may see this as a 'cocoon' that removes conservative evangelicals from the real world and its difficulties whereas believers would see an unbeliever's lack of hope as leading to unnecessary and irrational fear and idolatry, in putting other concerns before God. However, I have shown that eschatology is one example of how a normative teaching can be open to different interpretations, resulting in different espoused and operant theologies. For instance for some this results in an espoused apathy, as they apply normative understanding that 'preserving the earth is impossible', a leap then can be made to an

espoused theology of 'the world will end so why care so much'. Here rather than a clear linear structure of normative and espoused having biblical roots, respondents can jump from one clear biblical teaching to a personal attitude or response which does not have the same clear biblical root. For others, the normative teaching of eschatology subverts concern in other ways, such as removing any espoused or operant fear to do with environmental threats. This was also evidenced with the normative teaching of God's sovereignty, as in the conservative evangelicals' life, environmental problems cannot become so critical as to endanger the earth's future, as this would conflict with God's sovereignty. This is a further example of how general normative teachings are adapted to the context of environmental themes as an espoused theology, which themselves are not explicitly a part of normative teachings. Yet what happens is that environmental engagement is still tied to and regulated by normative teachings, but can be more detailed and varied than these roots themselves express. For others, in relation to eschatology, seeing how some of their contemporaries interpret normative theology into an espoused position of lack of care, can result in observers in the same group further 'mining' normative theology in an attempt to act as a 'corrective' to the views of their contemporaries.

Whereas in Chapter 5, the normative teaching of conversion led to a great appreciation of creation, or operant and espoused theology from the inside out, here the application of normative understandings such as the Fall and eschatology, result in creation being cognitively moulded into the mind-set of conservative evangelicals from the 'outside in'. In this way, rather than being experiential and linked to powerful emotional experiences, in many ways the incorporation of doctrines can be more in line with believing something from the Bible 'externally', which then results in people seeing things differently. With the backdrop to these two central doctrines in place, creation has been incorporated through normative interpretations into the 'first and last things' of the Christian unravelling of history, restricting both its purpose (the Fall) and potential (eschatology) in espoused and operant theologies.

However, dominion is still defined in a rich and positive espoused theology of sensitive care and stewardship, with even more detail fleshed out by conservative evangelicals than is evident in normative (biblical) teachings. This again can be understood in terms of a normative starting point resulting in a ripple effect as expressed by congregants, as also noted with conversion in Chapter 5. For instance, this can be seen in how the Fall negatively impacts human dominion yet conservative evangelicals espouse the view that human restoration or regeneration reverses some of the effect of the Fall as the image of God is restored in humans who are converted to the faith, and the resultant espoused theology is that dominion can be implemented better by those who are pursuing holiness

and have conquered sin in their lives. Being born again is therefore applied to environmental themes as an espoused theology despite the link being more difficult to decipher from an exact and clear normative teaching. Conservative evangelicals therefore have the ability to make cognitive connections from normative understandings to espoused positions, whilst shading in the finer details. Yet the overriding 'pulse' of normative theology is very much evangelism, and it is this drive which 'kicks in' for conservative evangelicals as they see a human creation that needs a Saviour, rather than a suffering non-human creation that needs the more detailed application of dominion.

The most important of all normative biblical doctrines and church mandates, to evangelise, becomes the central and imposing directive which combines with interpretations of 'the Fall' and eschatological beliefs. Here, the conservative evangelical normative understanding of what ultimately matters is that people are brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ whilst there is still time and this therefore becomes the central remit of the church and uppermost important thing in the life of conservative evangelicals, corporately and individually. The overarching focus upon the need for salvation can mean that other issues have less significance within espoused and operant positions. In effect, one normative drive can have the power to elevate an issue to the point of preventing the development of another issue, with at times the end result being the lack of a holistic integration of normative teachings in relation to creation.

I also showed how conservative evangelicals are permeated with a deeply anthropocentric way of viewing the world which has ramifications for environmental concern, for instance in whether this limits concern for non-human creation or clearly places responsibility for non-human creation upon human shoulders. With anthropocentrism, normative understanding can result in different espoused and operant positions, which can deeply affect creation. This is evidenced in the way normative understanding of anthropocentrism can be espoused in a way that literally blocks concern for non-human life, yet for others when anthropocentrism and stewardship are combined, normative theologies can work together in harmonious and self-reinforcing ways into a positive espoused position of care.

I presented evidence to show how congregants have to negotiate how to incorporate environmental stewardship in an individual context despite it being missing from corporate church life. A lack of official normative teaching leads to conservative evangelicals being their own theologians that draw in and grapple with various normative biblical spheres of influence. In effect, congregants start to mine normative theology, or conduct something of a systematic theology of creation, themselves and from memory, during the interview encounter. This is no small task and I applaud their willingness to have done this. What emerges are the numerous normative influences

leading to complex espoused and operant responses of great variety, perhaps due to a lack of any standardised direct leadership on the topic. With corporate versus individual engagement with dominion, the lack of a clearly articulated normative position from church leaders results in an incongruence between espoused and operant corporate and individual responses. With a lack of church engagement there are multiple normative roots feeding this espoused position which means at a corporate level environmental stewardship is a challenge to normativity.

My data also evidenced how, with the implementation of stewardship teachings, it has been noted how normative teachings can lack the detail required for specific pastoral teaching. Application of dominion in the twenty-first century is therefore hermeneutically problematic. This leads to the question as to whether or not a specific operant response on certain issues is required which actually goes beyond available normative church teaching. This was also evidenced within the data as some noted creation care was practised as something beyond the roots of normative church teaching. In a sense it can be hard for Scripture to address more contemporary situations and problems. Yet with conservative evangelicals there is an aversion to non-theological sources of input, which is the other potential source of formal theology.

Central to this is a fear of mainstream environmentalism as a social discourse and the perceived world-view that informs this philosophy which many conservative evangelicals believe is tantamount to a new religion. This is something which also has normative biblical roots in that conservative evangelicals see Scripture warning them not to get drawn into worshipping the creation rather than the Creator. The topic of environmentalism provides valuable insights in terms of the four voices theory. Here numerous normative teachings are applied or espoused when congregants reflect upon the environmental movement, that do clearly regulate in as much as they 'warn' or 'steer' people away from paths not deemed to be matching normative teachings. With environmentalism, conservative evangelical's normative theological understanding prevents them from treading the same path as broader society with movement towards secular environmental ethics and attitudes.

Normative theological teaching implicitly sets a 'hierarchy of concern'. Although an espoused theology of human responsibility is acknowledged, this is very low down on the agenda. This hierarchical structure can be maintained by the addition of further normative understandings such as with anthropocentrism, bringing back into focus human concerns as opposed to non-human concerns. In addition, because of this hierarchical structure different strands of normative theology can be either in harmony or disharmony. For instance, those lower down on the hierarchy can be perceived as a threat to those higher up, and are therefore resisted rather than implemented.



Normative theology also acts in a way which 'realigns' people after conversion and growth in the faith, to have different hopes and priorities. In effect normative theology both prioritises and marginalises certain issues as people are reshaped or reformed. This results in a particular 'conservative evangelical frame of reference' that has been identified from the data. However, I would further add that on instances this 'reforming' as individually interpreted and applied, can result in one normative teaching taking hold too strongly, blocking off other potential interests and 'Christian responses' to issues in the world.

For some, a tense trilateral relationship could be evidenced between the bringing together of the normative teachings of God's sovereignty, eschatology and dominion, which again were difficult to espouse in a harmonious way, but it was evident how one normative teaching could act as a rudder in steering others. Normative theologies can be grappled with and applied with a noted tension with instances such as whether or not to care much for the 'physical' or just focus on the 'spiritual' as would be seen with dominion and evangelism. As well as different weight being given to different normative teachings, individual normative teachings themselves can be interpreted differently by congregants, leading to espoused and operant theologies that are far from uniform. Furthermore, each normative teaching does not always lead to its own unique espoused and operant position as the linear model of theological reflection would suggest, but one normative teaching can be incorporated into the goals of another normative teaching. This was evidenced in exercising dominion for the purposes of evangelism.

For some a developed normative understanding of stewardship can hold in check possible negative effects of other normative doctrines. What emerges is that with my own modified four voice model of theological reflection, its linear and hierarchical nature are far more complex than previously thought. For instance, although normative theology can generally act as a thermostat in bringing espoused and operant theologies back into line, it is also evident how one particular normative theology can regulate other normative theologies, also like a thermostat. As well as regulating human attitudes and behaviours generally through normative teaching, in more detail different normative teachings themselves can regulate attitudes and behaviour by their affect upon other teachings.

In Chapter 6 I have shown how normative theology provides respondents with numerous doctrines and biblical themes which are central to their understanding of creation. These themes can 'check' the initial exuberance of experiencing creation previously evidenced in Chapter 5 and greatly influence operant theologies evident in relation to specific environmental issues, as shall be seen in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 7: PRESENTATION OF DATA PART 3, ENGAGING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

---

---

### 7:1 INTRODUCTION

---

In Chapters 5 and 6 I have identified the ways in which biblical interpretation and the application of certain doctrines result in a complex terrain that conservative evangelicals negotiate in relation to their attitudes toward the environment. In Chapter 7 I will now take this one step further, to present data that represents how this biblical interpretation results in certain attitudes, and resultant behaviours, toward environmental issues. These include the following: lifestyles and the environment, general environmental problems, species extinctions, climate change, and renewable energy. Again, the modified four voice model of theological reflection is used as an analytical framework. The issues of climate change, losses in biological diversity and renewable energy were chosen as case studies and are therefore analysed in greater detail than the briefer engagement with more general environmental problems. This meant that during interviews many respondents, if they did not mention the issues themselves, were prompted with questions about them. These three were chosen as they are commonly deemed to be the most important contemporary environmental issues.<sup>80</sup> The literature review established how climate change in particular is something of a divisive issue amongst evangelicals (Wardekkar, Petersen and van der Sluijs, 2009; Wilkinson, 2010a and b) and therefore something that warranted more detailed investigation. In contrast, far less was known about conservative evangelicals and species extinctions from previous empirical research and this issue also warranted further study. After analysing the attitudes and behaviours of my interviewees, and their levels of engagement with these environmental issues, I will provide further understanding as to why this is the case: specifically in presenting more broadly those things evangelicals note as feeling ‘burdened’ for, those issues they see as needing to be addressed as part of the living out of their Christian faith. In addition, in noting changed attitudes during some interviews, I assess the extent to which more traditional evangelical burdens have the potential to evolve and incorporate creation stewardship. I also provide further examples of how adherence to environmental legislation and specific demographic and biographic variables can also shape the way conservative evangelicals engage or disengage with environmental themes. As in Chapters 5 and 6 I will again use the modified four voices theory of theological reflection to help

---

<sup>80</sup> See Steven Bouma-Prediger (2001) Chapters 1 and 2, Celia Deane-Drummond (1996) Chapter 1, and the BBC television series *State of the Planet* (2004), episodes 1-3.

understand and conceptualise the data, in addition to allowing findings from the data to offer further understanding of how the model itself works.

## 7:2 LIFESTYLES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Lifestyle choices are intricately related to environmental protection and decay. Therefore, a strong theme chosen to probe during interviews was the question of lifestyle issues in relation to the environment. Table 12 summarises these issues and the number of interviewees who discussed them.

TABLE 12: POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL LIFESTYLE CHOICES AMONGST EVANGELICALS

Issue	Interviews	Issue	Interviews
Recycling Waste	27 (73%)	Use Public Transport	3 (8%)
Limit Water Usage	4 (11%)	Support Renewables	5 (14%)
Practise Vegetarianism	3 (8%)	Litter Picking	3 (8%)
Buy Organics	5 (14%)	Buy Fair Trade	3 (8%)
Buy Local Grown	1 (3%)	Composting	3 (8%)
Tree Planting	3 (8%)	Charity Shops	3 (8%)
Reduce Consumption	12 (32%)	Conservation	5 (14%)
Fasting	4 (11%)	Environmental/Conservation Groups Members	10 (27%)
Against Materialism	16 (43%)	Gardening	12 (32%)

Corporately, evangelicals express an awareness of a diverse number of ways they may affect the environment. Although only a small number of people mention some of the issues above, it should be noted that this does not necessarily mean that they were the only ones who practised it, such as with fasting for instance, as these are issues that in the main respondents talked about at their own discretion. However, a smaller number of interviewees mentioning an issue could also point towards

the issue not being seen as centrally important. In effect it was beyond the parameters of qualitative interviewing to get the views of all 37 respondents on all issues. Findings presented in the discussion below should therefore be understood in relation to the points I have just outlined.

In terms of the four voices of theology, a number of themes emerge from the analysis of lifestyles and the environment that the model can aid with in the conceptualisation and understanding of this data. For instance, lifestyle choices with a positive environmental impact, such as reducing consumption or more specifically with something like restricting water usage, were noted to be choices, as both an espoused and operant theology, that were related to more general normative church teaching to counteract worldliness and materialism (CH3:INT10), as was evidenced in pastoral teaching (CH2:SERM1, CH4:SERM1). Formal theology specifically warns against worldliness (Lloyd-Jones, 2003b [1976], pp.360-373) and of the biblical sources this can be learnt from (Matthew 13:22, Luke 21:34, 1 Timothy 6:10-12, 2 Timothy 4:10, pp.361-2). Wasting money on things not needed was deemed to be an aspect of consuming worldliness and being sucked into an unbiblical world-view and therefore clearly challenged by normative theology, creating a trajectory within espoused and operant theology to counter such materialism (CH3:INT10, CH2:INT6). Materialism especially came up regularly also because the evangelical tradition speaks very strongly upon this issue and is reiterated in formal theology (Stott, 1982, p.161-162) and Piper's (1996), discussion of money and Christian hedonism (pp.159-173). Examples of specific normative biblical theology that could be said to critique materialism are numerous and include those such as: 1Timothy 6:7-8, Matthew 6:19-20 and Ecclesiastes 5:10. During fieldwork conducted for this study some 25 sermons included teaching about the dangers of worldliness, it therefore being a strongly repeated theme. A 'sign of the times' is seen in a wasteful and throwaway society, which is seen as adrift from normative church teaching which conservative evangelicals are to resist within their own espoused and operant theologies (CH1:INT5, CH4:INT9). As in previous data chapters, conservative evangelicals use their own understanding of normative theology as a means to interpreting the lifestyles of non-Christians and the dangers of such operant lifestyles they see within those outside the body of Christ (CH4:INT4, CH4:INT7).

Conservative evangelicals see the Bible (normative theology) as teaching a lot about wisdom (such as Proverbs 3:13-18, James 1:5), and as taught from the pulpit (CH2:SERM16, CH3:SERM14). An aspect of how this wisdom can be implemented practically within operant theology is in resisting materialism by 'buying only what you need and use' which goes against the flow of a broader consumeristic society and that biblical wisdom is evident in not squandering resources of any kind (CH2:INT6). Again, as in previous chapters, this shows how a more general normative teaching

(wisdom) can be implemented within espoused and operant positions, in far more detail and more specifically, than can be gleaned from a pure biblical exegesis. An aspect of wisdom is seen as a responsible and wise use which is rooted in the spiritual and not the materialistic and a rejection of what conservative evangelicals see as the spiritual slide of a society turning away from God. Sustainability is seen as a way of respecting creation as an espoused theology and being impact conscious as expressed within operant theology, as an aspect of the wise implementation of dominion or normative theology in not straining the earth's resources too much. With operant theology this was seen in such actions as recycling, composting and more environmentally friendly forms of travel. The normative church teachings which lead to a kind of 'anti-materialism' go hand in hand with notions of stewardship or dominion, as a further aspect of normative theology, in a harmonious way. This links into previous findings about dynamics within the four voices in that when biblical teachings are brought together, this can create arenas of both harmony and discord. It was also seen as wrong for conservative evangelicals to waste and overconsume as this leads to inequality and suffering and is ultimately a sin and linked to greed, which evangelical Christians are to overcome and attempt to rout out in their lives (CH2:SERM22, CH1:SERM9). Here normative-espoused–operant positions can have a clear hierarchical structure.

It was also noted that financial benefits help (CH3:INT9, CH4:INT10), and this is also related to normative teaching of the importance to steward resources (Matthew 25:21) and that God is the owner of such resources (Psalm 24:1). An aspect of stewarding finances well was more explicitly detailed in desiring to spend such resources to forward God's purposes in the world (redemption) rather than our own selfish desires such as collecting physical goods and the latest gadgets or to create 'cosiness' that does not lead to happiness anyway (CH3:INT10, CH3:SERM6). The normative biblical theological narrative of the Fall, redemption and sanctification all normatively influence conservative evangelicals espoused and operant theology in a way which steers them away from materialism as an aspect of helping fulfil the 'Great Commission'. Again normative church teaching lends to the view that it is a human being's spiritual condition that results in happiness and not a person's physical wealth as can be deduced from Scripture such as 1 John 2: 15-17 and 1 Timothy 6: 9-10. The espoused position is that people therefore need to be rooted in the spirit and not the flesh and as well as resulting in an operant theology of being against materialism this was also seen as an important aspect of the operant theology embedded within practices such as fasting. Fasting, as promoted within normative theology (Matthew 6: 17-18, 9:15), is seen as aiding the spiritual life and resisting the flesh, of limiting consumption of food resulting in physical and spiritual health and less physical damage upon the environment (CH3:INT3). For instance, practising vegetarianism even

occasionally is known to have less impact upon the land and environment (CH3:INT9), so in line with this, the regular practice of fasting would also reduce human environmental footprints.<sup>81</sup>

Limiting consumption more broadly, as an expressed espoused theology, was also seen with clear normative roots in as much as conforming to the Lord and his Word (CH4:INT4). In addition, that normative teaching should result in an espoused and operant theology of a 'heart to give' to others rather than personal extravagance (CH4:INT4, CH4:INT9). Further normative connections can be made in that by denying self (by being against materialism) people can draw closer to Christ in their spiritual life and to store treasure in heaven rather than on earth: to fix their eyes on the celestial city rather than the 'eat, drink and be merry' attitude prevalent within broader society (CH4:INT4). Respondents draw upon their understanding of normative theology to articulate their own espoused position and operant lifestyles in addition to providing a prescription to the failings they see in broader non-Christian culture. Espoused theology is not just in relation to the theology embedded within what people say they do, but also the theology or lack thereof in what 'they see others do'.

For some, the normative links were clearly evident within operant theology in that a person's faith would present a voice of 'do I need it' which often concluded 'no' which led to a Christian life of simplicity and modesty (CH3:INT5). Normative theology also came in Christocentric terms in that with the help of Jesus in peoples' lives, the battle of wanting and wastefulness could be overcome (CH4:INT9, CH4:INT7). Again normative church teaching reinforced this; such as trusting God for his daily needs and therefore not worrying about finances and possessions as scripturally rooted in Matthew 6:25-34. With operant theology this led to a desire not to hoard physical goods, to re-use them and pass them on if no longer needed (CH3:INT6, CH3:INT1). Also for some, using charity shops was another way of expressing this operant theology, as a way of recycling, consuming less new goods and having a financial incentive to do so (CH3:INT4, CH3:INT5).

Furthermore, espoused reasons for being involved with conservation also had strong normative connections. The environment was seen as being created by a wise God and given 'perfect balance' but humans had the ability to interfere with this in a negative way (CH3:INT10). The environment is also seen as a good gift from God, and it is therefore better to live in harmony with it rather than cause damage (CH3:INT9). As an operant theology it was therefore seen as important to conduct work in less intrusive ways and to be more stringent with environmental

---

<sup>81</sup>For instance, see more detailed arguments put forward by the Vegetarian Society. <https://www.vegsoc.org/environment> (Accessed: 3/8/2015).

protection (CH2:INT9, CH3:INT10). Interviewees who were presently or previously members of a stewardship/conservation organisation also expressed their reasons for involvement in strongly theological terms or rather having a clear normative underpinning. For instance, that God gave creation for us to enjoy and in wisely stewarding, humans can continue to enjoy it (CH2:INT2); that Christians are to be loving and merciful and therefore cruel practices upon animals should be stopped (CH4:INT4); that exercising dominion means the earth should not be destroyed but managed for future generations (CH1:INT8); that secular organisations doing good in the area of environmental protection can be seen as an aspect of ‘common grace’ in the way they care (CH4:INT10), with notions of common grace featuring as an aspect of formal theology (Carson, 2008, pp.36,60; Edwards, 2000 [1734], p.24); that preservation gives evangelising opportunities with the Great Commission being central to conservative evangelicalism (CH1:INT1, CH3:INT10); and that improving the environment is an aspect of helping orphans and widows which the Bible teaches people to do (CH4:INT2). However, as in previous examples, conservative evangelical ability to practise this as an operant theology can be mitigated by personal finances or rather a lack of adequate personal finances can result in a more toned down approach to involvement with environmental concerns, even when they are deemed by respondents to have a biblical (normative) basis (CH4:INT4, CH4:INT5).

Further lifestyle choices noted by interviewees included cleaning local environments by litter picking for instance. This was seen as ‘cleaning God’s creation’ and therefore doing something explicitly ‘for the Lord’ (CH4:INT3). Litter picking was therefore explained as an operant theology with roots to the Creator: to help keep His creation in good order and therefore as an aspect of service to Him. It is therefore linked to a further normative understanding of stewardship and the operant expression of what is deemed to be a Christian lifestyle. Furthermore, this was seen as giving the right signals to broader society and therefore making Christianity look more attractive and ultimately aiding evangelism (CH3:INT6).

Buying local produce and organic produce was seen as an expression of being against modern processing techniques, being more natural and therefore healthier and perhaps the way God intended (CH3:INT4). Organics was also seen in a very positive light with factory farming and industrial methods being seen as hard to align with caring for animals (CH4:INT4, CH3:INT5, CH3:INT4). Non-organic industrial farming methods created a normative dissonance in as much as being linked to animal cruelty which was seen as biblically wrong (CH3:INT4) and with respondents mentioning Scriptures such as Proverbs 12:10, and added to this could be Exodus 23:5 and Proverbs 27:23. Although this normative-espoused–operant alignment is clearly evident, it is also something

which did not figure in pastoral teaching or other church media sources. It is therefore another aspect of congregants making connections themselves independent of normative hierarchical structures other than the Bible. Respondents were on the whole happier to choose organic, but this was limited by financial practicalities, with again operant and espoused theologies being tempered by non-normative inputs, or financial practicality (CH4:INT4, CH4:INT5, CH3:INT6). In other instances, specifically organic shops were also seen as having pagan links with other products they sold, and at times part of a 'hippy culture' which conservative evangelicals were to express caution with (CH4:INT5). In this instance further dissonance was noted with normative theology, in that some hesitation was noted with organics, in not wanting to be brought into a broader counter-Christian spiritual world-view.

Vegetarianism was not seen as something warranted by any normative church position or teaching, and it was therefore, as an operant theology, something that was very rarely practised. For conservative evangelicals scriptural normative teaching is deemed to promote the view that it was acceptable to kill animals for food (Genesis 9:3, Acts 10:9-16). Yet for some, a dissonance in their operant theology was still evident after their conversion in as much as an 'uneasiness' could be identified in knowing the way animals can suffer prior to being consumed, as expressed by one interviewee with personal experience in farming animals (CH4:INT4). This could be an example of how normative theology, although accepted, when applied as an operant theology within a person's individual experiences, can lead to unresolved tension, or an internal discord, especially when personal experience, as a 'lens of contextualisation' is brought into the equation. Yet because the normative imperative is there, a change in operant theology is still unlikely, due to the power normative theology wields and the desire of respondents to be shaped and obedient to it. In Christian circles vegetarianism was therefore something that was 'awkward' to put into practise, partly due to its rarity and the social implications it can entail (CH3:INT9).

Gardening, or tending to that piece of creation that a person has been given stewardship over, was seen as a way of showing an appreciation and love of creation (CH1:INT4, CH4:INT2), going back to normative church teaching as early as Genesis, with Adam and Eve to tend the garden (CH4:INT9). It was also seen as providing produce and satisfaction from taking bare ground and helping turn it into something more beautiful and bountiful providing personal blessing to having 'tended the garden' and seeing God's creation up close (CH3:INT6). Gardening was deemed as a way of intimately seeing the great design of God, with for instance tiny seeds growing to bear much fruit and that as God given it was therefore worthy of respect (CH4:INT2). Gardening was linked to normative teaching in that it is an aspect of stewardship rather than to neglect such duties and helps



keep a healthy ecosystem or balance that God puts in place within creation, such as helping bees (CH1:INT6). Specifically tree-planting was seen as a way of rejuvenating God's creation, providing many needed things such as oxygen, fruits, a habitat and shade for animals and birds (CH3:INT6), and something that can be helped by legislation (CH3:INT9).

### 7:3 EVANGELICALS AND GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

---

Interviewees discussed a total of 23 environmental problems and these have been presented in Table 13, which also highlights the number of interviews that mentioned the issue and as a percentage of those who took part. Table 13 also documents what the most common attitudes to different issues were, with further reasons given by interviewees being discussed below. This summary provides a valuable overview of the personal responses of conservative evangelicals to specific issues, richly containing both espoused and operant theology, showing various links and relationships to normative theology.

Recycling, being a popular activity and also a legislative requirement, meant people were familiar with it and as an interviewer I often used this as a prompt to engage conversation on the topic of environmental issues. In addition, the issues of climate change, species extinctions and renewable energy, forming more focused case study material later in this chapter (Figures 16-18 and Tables 14-17), also meant that interviewees were often prompted with questions about the issues. However, all other environmental problems were in the main brought up at the interviewees' own discretion.

Starting with the highest interview count, respondents were almost unanimously in favour of recycling initiatives, in addition to the smaller number of interviews commenting upon the issues of deforestation, air pollution, water pollution, factory farming, genetic engineering, animal cruelty, dwindling bee numbers and littering: interviewees positively engaged in an environmentally sensitive way with these issues. The issues of climate change, species extinctions, renewable energy, pesticide use, nuclear power, fracking, badger culls, mining, the ozone layer, and human population levels however led to more debate with different positions being expressed. As shall be seen in the remaining parts of this chapter, certain environmental issues elicit a stronger discord with normative theological reasoning, such as climate change, leading to more scepticism, whereas others elicit a more positive resonance with normative theology, resulting in espoused and operant theologies of engagement, such as with deforestation for instance. In addition, responses to certain issues are

more soaked in normative theology, whether leading to scepticism or engagement, whilst responses to others can have less normative influence and more non-normative roots, such as renewable energy. It also seems evident that the three case studies resulted in more scepticism and the expression of divergent views than the multitude of other issues that were spoke of by respondents at their own discretion.

TABLE 13: ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS DISCUSSED BY EVANGELICALS

Environmental Problem	Number of Interviewees	Most Common Response
Waste Management (Recycling)	29, (78%)	Almost unanimously in favour
Climate Change	29, (78%)	A mixture of scepticism and belief
Species Extinctions	26, (70%)	Mostly against, also lack of concern
Renewable Energy	14, (37%)	Highly sceptical and mainly not in favour
Deforestation	11, (30%)	Strongly against
Air Pollution	8, (22%)	Strongly against
Factory Farming	8, (22%)	Strongly against
Pesticides	7, (19%)	Mostly against
Nuclear Power	7, (19%)	Split between in favour and against
Genetic Engineering	7, (19%)	Strongly against
Animal Cruelty	7, (19%)	Strongly against
Water Pollution	5, (14%)	Strongly against
Population	3, (8%)	Mixed responses
Littering	3, (8%)	Strongly against
Mining	3, (8%)	Most against but some in favour
Soil Pollution/Degradation	3, (8%)	Mixed responses
Bees	3, (8%)	Desire to protect them
Badger Cull	2, (5%)	Mixed, in favour and against
Fracking	2, (5%)	Mixed, concern and uncertainty
Ozone	2, (5%)	Mixed, interest and reservations
Whaling	2, (5%)	Strongly against
Sealing	1, (3%)	Strongly against
Bioremediation	1, (3%)	In favour of this technology

A total of 27 of the 29 interviewees showed positive support for the recycling of their domestic waste, with one being against and one sceptical. However, numerous respondents only

started recycling once it became a local council initiative and therefore did not feel a burden to practise recycling until then. Those in favour pointed to reasons such as it not being possible to go on taking from creation without thinking about the effects of this, desiring to live in a clean environment, and to be aware of human impacts and sustainability (CH3:INT2, CH3:INT4, CH1:INT6). Particularly, that we should not waste resources and that recycling initiatives are one of the positive changes in our lifetimes (CH4:INT8, CH2:INT9). Other reasons had more obvious connections to normative theology. For instance it was also mentioned that people should think more about it now it has been brought to our attention and therefore governmental regulation in this instance was a good thing (CH3:INT10, CH2:INT6), with Christians being scripturally bound to obey the ordinances of government (Romans 13: 1-6). Other normative theologically rooted reasoning included recycling being humans trying to make amends for their sin in relation to the environment, such as greed and wastefulness, and that it is an example of wise dominion and stewardship (CH3:INT6). It was also seen as an example of how creation has limits to supply, that resources created by God are not infinite, but need to be managed better, again an aspect of wiser stewardship (CH2:INT3).

With regards to deforestation, interviewees were almost unanimously against this (10/11) as an expression of both espoused and operant theology, with the only exception being when the protection of forest resources results in human unemployment (CH4:INT10), having normative theological roots in human superiority over the rest of creation being seen as compromised. The main reasons put forward why deforestation was wrong were that it reduces the health of the environment, such as the atmosphere, soil fertility, and in reducing wildlife habitats threatens the existence of numerous species (CH2:INT6, CH4:INT2, CH4:INT6). It was also believed that people should buy correctly sourced products and that older trees should be protected, and those used replanted (CH4:INT2, CH4:INT1) and that obedience to legislation and government initiatives was therefore good, and rooted in normative Scripture and reiterated in pastoral teaching, (CH4:SERM19). Furthermore, that Christians should pray for leaders and those with authority (CH2:SERM15). Forests were stated to be a part of God's life-support system which needs to be managed with wise dominion (CH2:INT6), yet although an important societal issue not a church issue as such (CH2:INT5). So although a strong resistance to deforestation was expressed by interviewees in their espoused and operant theology, with clear normative theological roots, this is side-tracked from church attention. Again normative theological understanding being responsible, that such an issue is not explicitly a mandate of the church but an issue people can be involved in personally still based upon normative theological reasoning. In the instance of deforestation, normative theology does not in the main result in discord leading to scepticism, but rather positive engagement, as also evidenced with the issue of air pollution.

For air pollution, 8/8 interviewees mentioning the issue were strongly against it, as an expression of espoused and operant theology. Reasons included it being a sign of unwise use of limited resources (such as coal and oil) by using them up too quickly, and it being fuelled by greed (CH3:INT10, CH2:INT3). These responses, though not mentioned by the respondents themselves, are rooted in normative understandings of greed being an aspect of sin as noted previously in Chapter 6:2 and the need for born again Christians to exercise wisdom in all things rather than altering the balances put in place by God (CH2:INT1). However, everyone was seen as culpable in just using electricity in their homes (CH1:INT6), and that advances were needed in things such as electric cars (CH3:INT3). Here reasoning may seem non-normative at first instance, in that science and technology can help, however conservative evangelicals believe human improvements through science can be an aspect of God's revelation. Air pollution was also linked to the poisoning of other parts of the ecosystem and even humans when entering the food chain, a threat to those made in God's image (CH2:INT1), and therefore an aspect of unwise and failed dominion (CH3:INT10). There was a desire for tighter restrictions (being in favour of legislation and obedience to it), and benefits had been noted with this in more recent decades (CH3:INT5, CH2:INT9). With normative theological reasoning it was also seen how civilisation was declining without God and therefore an aspect of everything getting worse (CH2:INT3).

In relation to water pollution, 5/5 respondents were against this form of environmental degradation as an aspect of their espoused and operant theology. Having a good quality of water was seen as part of having a healthy ecosystem, therefore keeping in balance God's creation. There was seen to be a need to reduce pollution in the sea, as the knock on effect with polluted marine resources could be contaminants entering the food chain, again threatening the epoch of God's creation (CH2:INT1). Oil spills were seen as a regular sign of humans making a mess of the environment and therefore failing in stewardship often caused by the desire for profit and greed, an aspect of sin (CH3:INT2, CH4:INT5). It was also seen through the lens of environmental missions: as organisations such as Tearfund could improve water facilities in developing countries and spread the gospel (CH1:INT3). Reasons therefore have strong connections to normative theology leading to positive engagement with the issue of addressing water pollution in espoused and operant theologies. In particular, these include: wise stewardship in protecting God's creation and especially those made in the Creator's image; of sin leading to environmental degradation; and that in responding to environmental challenges on the ground in a physical way is an aspect of furthering God's greater mission in the earth, to evangelise.

Factory farming was another issue that brought a strong emotional espoused theological response with 8/8 interviewees being against, as did animal cruelty with 7/7 being strongly against this. However, this was not always backed up by an operant theology of refusing to buy such products. It is therefore one of the rare occurrences where discrepancy exists between espoused and operant theology. Factory farming was seen as being driven by human greed in wanting cheap food (CH2:INT3). It was therefore something led by demand rather than any ethical deliberation and in relation to normative theology could be seen as rooted in sin. Interviewees also suggested that it would be better to make different choices, such as eating free range eggs, so there would be better living conditions for chickens and other animals and less cruelty involved (CH1:INT2), but that this would only come about through legislation, which conservative evangelicals would then obey (CH2:INT3). The higher financial cost of organic produce was given as a reason for not changing consumption patterns (CH4:INT4), but I would suggest there also seems to be an aspect of allowing things to go on as usual, rather than making a concerted effort to change and therefore incongruence between the normative-espoused and the operant axis. Factory farming was seen as an unnatural production method, based upon unbiblical principles, causing animal cruelty and suffering and that society was caught in a system of breeding animals the wrong way (CH1:INT6). In relation to normative theology, this style of production was deemed to be wrong, whereas God's way would be animals living in a natural environment. The practice of breeding broiler chickens and mass produced cattle were seen as related to a literal greed in the developed world, as societies become more obese, and human health is affected (CH2:INT4, CH1:INT6).

Specifically looking at animal cruelty it was argued that there was a need to take more interest in how we care for animals, how they are looked after and how they are killed when being used for food (CH2:INT3, CH1:INT6). It was noted that even animals used for food should have a quality of life and grow in open spaces and that God's type of farming and human farming are very different: with industrial farming another sign of society moving away from God, being a more recent phenomenon, as things would have been very different in biblical times (CH3:INT7). Animal cruelty was seen as a sign of humanity abusing the earth, and that animal welfare is important for Christians and that we should change factory farming if possible, as we are made in God's image, so we should treat animals as He would treat them (CH4:INT4). Again, normative theological understanding is that being born again, as reiterated in Chapter 6:3, changes a person's perception and leads them to be more concerned about the welfare of human as well as non-human lifeforms. It was noted how Christians have a new heart and this should impact how they view and treat animals (CH4:INT4). Other examples involved being against commercial whaling, sealing and proposed badger culls in the U.K. (CH4:INT4, CH4:INT1). The reasoning in favour of animal welfare

was therefore on the whole strongly linked with normative (biblical) theological understanding, and perhaps this is one issue, resonating deeply with conservative evangelicals, where there is a potential for changed practices in the future.<sup>82</sup>

With the issue of pesticides used in farming, 5/7 interviewees were against this. Some saw it as a cause of ill health leading to cancers (CH4:INT1). It pointed to how humanity made mistakes in the past with DDT, and that there was a need for clear and open testing before use (CH2:INT3). In addition, that vested interests delay legislation against some pesticides used in U.K. (CH1:INT4) and if it was organically feasible to feed the world it should become the norm (CH3:INT2). Pesticide use was also seen as a sign of humans tampering with the earth God has created in a detrimental way, quoting the normative link to Scripture from Genesis 3:5 with the temptation of Eve in that 'you shall be as gods', and failing to implement a normative understanding of dominion (CH2:INT3). Some respondents therefore saw technology as having the potential to be detrimental to human health and therefore a possible threat to a healthy creation already established as good by a wise God. Anthropocentric care, or human concerns, therefore fuelled attitudes. These espoused views of being against pesticide use did not always feed into an operant theology of buying organic produce. Yet it seems to be a case of how people would be happy with more movement toward congruence between their espoused and operant theologies in the future, but this would require more leadership, perhaps pastoral teaching, legislative directives and to be less of a financial burden. Those in favour of pesticide use pointed to increasing population levels that require use of pesticides and inorganic fertilisers to produce more food from the same area to support such populations (CH2:INT1), therefore also resonating with normative theology of humans to fill the earth and subdue it, as part of the dominion mandate in Genesis.

Some of the reservations about pesticide use are also evident with genetic engineering, with 7/7 interviewee against its development. GM is one issue that, with conservative evangelical interpretation, results in dissonance with normative theology leading to espoused and operant positions that were unanimously against the technology. Here, humans were seen as trying to 'play God' and becoming obsessed with more power and control over creation by getting involved with things they should not (CH2:INT3, CH4:INT1). It was noted how nobody really knows the long-term effects of eating genetically engineered crops and that science does not always get it right (CH2:INT3). It was argued that because of genetic engineering being allowed in the U.K. we were now in 'worrying times': with possible consequences for the food chain, cross-pollination, and

---

<sup>82</sup> An up-to-date example of such engagement can be seen with the organisation CreatureKind ([becreaturekind.org](http://becreaturekind.org)) Accessed 22/8/16.

species numbers (CH2:INT3). Just as with pesticides, it was believed that the promoting of organics was one possible solution. Both pesticide use and GM technologies therefore provide further examples of environmental issues that result in very precise normative dissonance with conservative evangelicals that warn of the dangers to creation and therefore result in espoused and at times operant theology of engaging with the issue in an environmentally friendly way.

Results for nuclear power were mixed with 3/7 being in favour and 4/7 being against. Those in favour thought it a more environmentally friendly form of energy production in comparison to others, as long as waste is stored safely and securely (CH2:INT6). It was also seen as something that is here to stay, and therefore what is needed is to improve waste management to ensure safe keeping (CH4:INT5; CH3:INT9). Those against thought that there have been too many accidents and scares in the past, having devastating consequences (CH4:INT1), with the Chernobyl Disaster having a literal impact upon people in North Wales, with the contaminating of livestock and farmland due to deposits ending up on Welsh farmland. Such personal experience and knowledge therefore affected the attitudes of some (CH1:INT8), and is a further example of the idea of normative theological interpretation being influenced by a 'lens of contextualisation'. Nuclear knowledge was seen as something highly dangerous, that humans had created something they could not get rid of and because it can be used for weapons as well, was seen as being evil (CH4:INT1). In this instance, as with GM above, the normative theological resonance is that it is seen as wrong for humans to create technologies that can have the power to radically alter God's creation which leads to espoused positions of being against nuclear technologies. Yet there were mixed views and those in favour saw the energy potential of nuclear power as a gift of God's creation and as climate change had now become the concern of the day, attitudes toward nuclear seemed to be shifting in a more positive direction (CH2:INT6). Yet again, specific environmental issues can be responded to with vastly different positions of espoused and operant theology, yet such competing positions are still reinforced by normative theology stemming from the same source (Bible). As with other environmental issues, they are not mentioned in the normative source of pastoral teaching.

Responses to population levels were mixed. It was noted how high population causes food scarcity and the overuse of pesticides and chemical fertilisers, therefore centrally related to other environmental issues (CH2:INT1). In addition, improvements in health and medicines had led to higher population levels and there was therefore a need for more education to reduce birth rates (CH2:INT9). Therefore, previous blessings in reduction of child mortality and longer lifespans resulted in the dilemma of how to cope with a growing population (CH2:INT9). However, these may have been less representative views as a more common conservative evangelical espoused

theological position would be that God has given a biblical normative theological mandate to go forth and multiply (Genesis 1:28), and that the earth is not overpopulated, and God has created a world that could cope with current population levels and further increase (CH3:INT9; CH3:INT10). Furthermore, as detailed in Chapter 6:8, a central fear and suspicion of the environmental movement was seen in that they may promote what is seen as an anti-human position, or desire to restrict and curtail population growth as a way of protecting the environment. Espoused theological views therefore represented a spectrum again being a further example of different normative theological strands affecting espoused theology in a way that results in different conclusions.

Attitudes to mining were also mixed, with it being seen as another sign of failings in human stewardship and rather driven by greed and the desire for quick profits (CH1:INT6); using the earth's resources up too quickly and causing accidents like the Aberfan disaster (CH2:INT3). It was therefore seen by some as a form of exploitation and too great a desire for wealth and personal comforts and it is important to manage waste and regenerate areas afterwards (CH4:INT7; CH3:INT5). The normative theological drives for these espoused and operant attitudes again therefore centred on human sin and stewardship failings. Likewise, soil pollution and land degradation was seen as another example of part of the earth's ecosystem being damaged by human activities, resulting in less crop yields due to pollution (CH2:INT1). Certain farming techniques were seen as detrimental, leading to dust bowls (CH2:INT7), however that these are tough issues in that an expanding population needs to be fed but the end result is a detrimental impact upon the environment (CH2:INT9). Normative theological drives to such espoused positions were therefore again trading off against one another, with failings of dominion on the one hand and needs to feed a growing human population on the other.

Declining bee numbers caused concern for the three respondents who chose to talk about this issue. This worry centred around the possibility of food scarcity for humans caused by dwindling bee numbers (CH4:INT5). This pointed to the need for better management of the land: again a wiser stewardship. Human interference was seen as a main cause of declining bee numbers, such as transporting colonies for pollination purposes, the effects of telecommunications, electricity transportation and the use of pesticides (CH1:INT4). It was therefore seen as human interference upon creation as God designed, leading to failings in a damaged ecosystem, with modern technologies to blame, in addition to selfishness and greed. It was also evident that all three respondents noted non-theological knowledge sources that had impacted their concern; for one seeing presentations by a conservation organisation (CH1:INT8), for another being influenced by TV documentaries (CH4:INT5) and for another, personal experience on keeping bees as a hobby and



being a member of beekeeping groups providing education on the topic (CH1:INT4). Their attitudes were therefore influenced by personal experience, which they then bring alongside normative principles when forming their espoused and operant positions, and is a further example of a now repeated theme and what I have termed the 'lens of contextualisation'.

Only two respondents commented on each of the issues of badger culls, fracking, and the ozone, and responses were mixed. The badger cull was seen as a cruel, unnecessary intervention in God's creation: the killing of a lovely creature (CH4:INT1). An espoused theology of again humanity meddling too precisely in the creation as set up by God, an interference that creates some tension with normative theology, in that it is best for humans to interfere less. However, it was also seen by another who expressed sympathy with farmers: that their livelihood could be at stake because of the threat of disease in cattle, and therefore rooted in anthropocentric human concerns and that concerns of wildlife should be subservient to human needs (CH1:INT8). Again, normative theology provides a backdrop to competing positions of espoused and operant theology. Fracking was seen as a failing in stewardship, in attempting to take too much from creation and potentially damaging the earth's structure (CH4:INT7), and also that time will tell in that there is not yet enough evidence available to support it (CH1:INT6). It was therefore an espoused theology linked to notions of dominion and stewardship. The ozone issue was seen as a precursor to 'global warming', with environmentalists always making a big issue out of something, when in any case God is sovereign over these things and when the real issue is that people need to get right with him whilst there is still time (CH4:INT4). Here it can be seen an espoused theology rooted in a normative theological understanding of God's sovereignty, eschatology and the need for conversion. However, an alternative view was that satisfactorily addressing damage to the ozone layer is God's way of showing how we could also tackle climate change. Here the link is made in normative theology to God's sovereignty and that right actions by humans can solve environmental issues (CH3:INT9). The one person who brought up the issue of bioremediation (making useable things from waste products) did so in a very positive and supportive way, regarding it as a wise expression of his understanding of dominion (CH2:INT1). Yet his position and knowledge was spawned through his own doctoral scientific research and personal study and not through church teaching, and is therefore a further example of normative theology being applied through a 'lens of contextualisation'.

To conclude this section, it has been evident that when taking individual environmental issues in isolation, such as: deforestation, air pollution, water pollution, recycling, factory farming, animal cruelty, pesticide use, GM technologies and bees, 'pockets of concern and engagement' exist

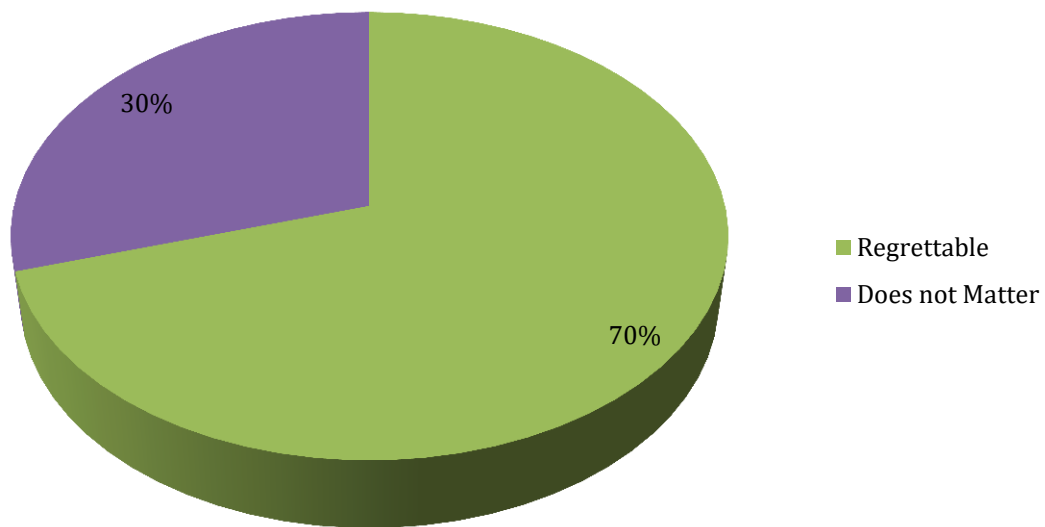
independently of the more broader negative doctrinal influences noted in Chapter 6. These issues elicit normative theology in a way that leads to espoused and operant theologies of engagement, also in a way different to the three case studies to follow. Such normative theological resonance includes being against sin and greed; desiring to see a wise dominion exercised; desiring to obey or seek further legislation to address environmental issues; to promote human health; to help keep the delicate balances put in place by God and not interfere in the Creator's realm by making things unnatural; to use such issues as evangelistic tools and that being born again can change environmentally damaging attitudes and practices. Multiple normative theological roots are therefore drawn upon by respondents in representing their espoused and operant engagement. Yet other issues such as: population levels, mining, nuclear power, badger culls and the ozone layer show how espoused and operant theologies are more varied with differing attitudes expressed, and how normative theology can be used to back up such differing positions, in creating either a resonance or discord with specific environmental issues. This is a finding that is more acutely evident in the case studies of species extinctions and climate change with that of renewable energy providing further insights.

#### 7:4 EVANGELICALS AND SPECIES EXTINCTIONS

---

Although previous research had shown climate change was a divisive issue for evangelicals, very little was known about evangelical attitudes toward species extinctions from previous empirical studies, and it was one of the surprising results of this thesis that as many as 30% viewed species extinctions as unimportant and only 70% as important.

FIGURE 16: EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD SPECIES EXTINCTIONS



Source: Calculated from the 27 interviewees who talked about the issue.

Even with the 70% being against extinctions, many of these responses are still tinged with scepticism because of reasons such as interpretations of God’s sovereignty. More precisely in terms of the four voices, even espoused and operant positions of positive engagement with species extinctions, are still ‘held in check’ by normative theology. As well as preventing engagement with certain environmental issues, normative theology can also lead to a more nuanced and limited engagement in other instances. Table 14 represents the reasons given by conservative evangelicals that thought it was regrettable when losses in biological diversity occurred, when interrogated during the interview encounter.

TABLE 14: EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD LOSSES IN BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (1)

Reasons given why Species Extinctions are Regrettable
We need to learn to live together (humans and non-humans) and to preserve things
God had a reason for creating them (like we need biological diversity) so we should try and prevent extinctions
Humans making their environment uncomfortable
Sign of humans failing to care for the environment (failure to exercise wise dominion, mismanagement of our lifestyles)
God loves diversity and created all things good but we sin in not caring for it
Sad if caused by humans, but not if a natural process (God's hands)
Sign of using creation to satisfy greed, rather than for our good and God will find us guilty (sin)
God created the earth and everything in it- there is room for every creature
Sign of governmental corruption using resources selfishly and short-sightedly

Table 14 shows how for those interviewees that saw losses in biological diversity as regrettable, a strong espoused theology can be noted in their responses. These positions are fuelled by normative theological understanding in specific areas such as: a wise God creating a good creation of diversity (CH2:INT2); God had a reason for creating them and extinctions are a failure to exercise wise dominion (CH4:INT7;CH2:INT1;CH1:INT2;CH4:INT6); a result of fallen man, sin, greed and corruption (CH1:INT5;CH2:INT3), and further complicated by whether or not the problem has a human or divine origin or God's sovereignty (CH1:INT8;CH4:INT8). Added to these is then the trade-off between importance given to human and non-human creation, which is more complicated for respondents to negotiate from normative theology (CH3:INT10). For instance, although the Bible clearly identifies humans as superior, how this fleshes out can be more problematic in as much as some interviewees brought up the issue of how humans are infringing upon non-human creation and failing to live in harmony with non-human creation, but that God created an earth with room for every creature (CH3:INT8). Whilst others admitted to 'their guard coming up' when talking about the issue due to a clash between feeling sympathetic to the plight of endangered species but also believing God's intention is for humans to multiply and fill the earth, and were often suspicious of environmentalist claims about species extinctions (CH2:INT10). Although this could be related to dominion, it could also be seen as decentralising the anthropocentrism so clearly evident within normative theology, and therefore an area of contention for conservative evangelicals. Normative understanding of God's sovereignty was also noted as a strong background theme, influencing espoused and operant positions: that He was still in control and allowed this to happen (CH1:INT8). That it was important

to see what He wants us to learn from this, even something like allowing species extinctions to give humans a definitive final warning (CH2:INT4). Yet for others, notions of God’s sovereignty meant leaving things to go on as they are, preventing them desiring to engage with the issue any more deeply. In terms of the four voices, normative theology noted in Chapter 6 triggers responses within espoused and operant positions, such as a desire for increased population, fear of environmentalism and God’s sovereignty. However, Table 14 also highlights one of the central normative doctrines in Chapter 5: with a more important place being given to the exercising of stewardship and dominion, and also in relation to regeneration, the expression of a more caring attitude and how extinctions are related to sin. In addition to influencing engagement with species extinctions for those who thought it was regrettable, God’s sovereignty also clearly led to scepticism and disbelief for those who thought extinctions were not regrettable, amongst other reasons noted in Table 15.

TABLE 15: EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD LOSSES IN BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (2)

Reasons why Species Extinctions do not Matter
Just a sign of deteriorating conditions leading to End Times
God is the Creator and can ‘draw new species out the bag’
The Lord created and He can look after as and when He chooses
End Times approaching we have far greater things to worry about: we should think more about helping people and evangelising
Part of living on a fallen earth that God has cursed
Extinctions all part of God’s good providence, no need to worry ‘the Lord is in it’
Sceptical of claims made about extinctions
Just part of natural processes
God can re-create extinct species in the new heaven and earth
Nothing is perfect in a fallen world

The positions expressed in Table 15, as an espoused and often operant theology, are largely a result of normative theological understanding. Responses were often tinged with fatalism such as ‘there is nothing I can do about it anyway’, and that God has reiterated what the important task for Christians is: the gospel (evangelism) (CH2:INT5). The Bible was seen as important with even the Word being seen as prophesying ‘this is the way it is going to go’, ultimately leading to the destruction of everything, clearly linked to a normative understanding of eschatology (CH3:INT7). In addition,

extinctions are seen as centrally related to the Fall of man and the entrance of sin into the world and that humans cannot change this (CH1:INT3). Table 15 clearly presents the central normative theological trajectories highlighted in Chapter 6 and how they can lead to less concern for the specific environmental issue of losses in biological diversity when conservative evangelicals articulate an espoused and operant position. Specifically this is in relation to eschatology, evangelism, God's sovereignty, anthropocentrism, the Fall and a fear of environmentalism. In terms of the four voices theory of analysis, species extinctions show how normative theology takes a centrally important place in the development of environmental attitudes and behaviours, and especially with the evangelical environmental quadrilateral. Specifically this is most evidently seen resulting in espoused and operant positions of inaction. In this respect normative theology is drawn upon to justify the way things are, or are going, and also to back up responses of individuals. Yet positions of engagement and disengagement can draw upon normative roots to shape and reinforce opposite espoused and operant theology. Normative theological interpretation can therefore lead to various positions rather than a consensus, even from people within the same group. In conclusion, Tables 14-15 show clearly how the normative theology outlined in Chapter 6 fleshes out into espoused and operant theology when focusing upon a specific environmental issue. I would argue that dominion and regeneration do not feature strongly enough and this needs further input from formal theology in the future. Although far greater scepticism was expressed with the issue of climate change, again normative theological reasoning took centre stage in espoused and operant theological positions.

## 7:5 EVANGELICALS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

---

Figure 17 shows, as a percentage of the 29 interviewees that discussed climate change, those who believe in anthropogenic climate change as a reality, those that do not believe, and those that are uncertain. Tables 16 and 17 also present the reasons given for these positions. Results show that almost half of respondents confirmed that they did believe humans were responsible for causing climate change, yet more than half either did not think humans were responsible or were uncertain.

FIGURE 17: EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD CLIMATE CHANGE

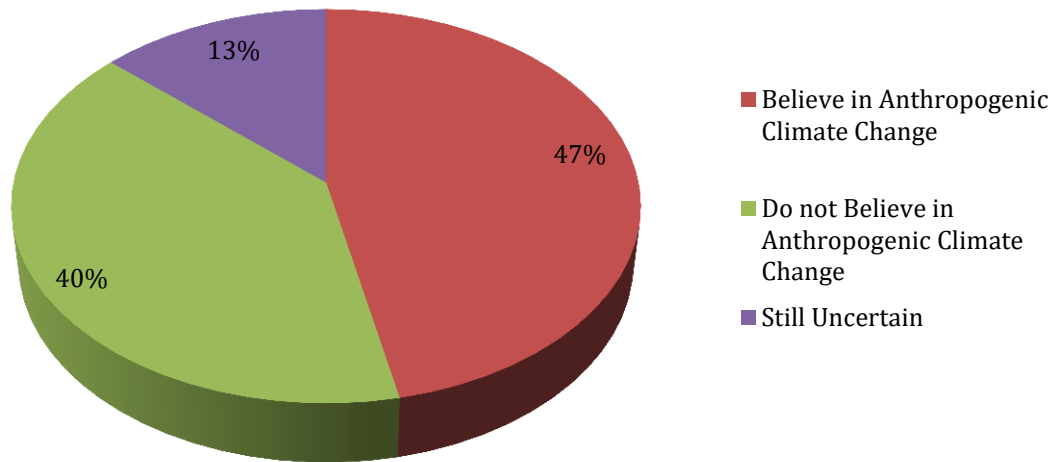


Table 15 presents the multiple reasons why interviewees believed that human activity does have an impact on the global climate.

TABLE 16: EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD CLIMATE CHANGE (1)

Reasons for believing in anthropogenic climate change
We have consumed too many fossil fuels, distorting the delicate balance put in place by God
Evidence of a failing in stewardship
More scientific research and consensus available, like from the Arctic and the plight of the Polar Bear
Desire for 'comfy' lifestyles: using up limited resources too quickly
Humans wrongly accelerating natural processes
Part of deteriorating conditions leading to End Times
Science training helps understand all this
People do not want to believe it so they do not have to change their lifestyles

The theology embedded within espoused positions and operant stances, in relation to climate change, again have very strong normative theological drives. With belief, and then non-belief or

scepticism roughly dividing respondents down the middle, it is evident that normative theological understandings can be interpreted as a drive for polar opposite espoused and operant positions. Then with those expressing belief in anthropogenic climate change, this is reiterated amidst a backdrop of multiple normative theologies, with one prompting engagement, yet another added as an almost immediate disqualifier. For instance, with espoused positions such as climate change representing a failing in stewardship but that God is still in control (CH4:INT7), being informed by dominion and God's sovereignty, and that climate change is a result of too much human consumption but that the End Times are coming anyway (CH2:INT5), clearly linked to normative interpretations of sin and then eschatology.

The influence of a normative understanding of God's sovereignty fleshed out in more detail, such as despite the evidence pointing to humans influencing the global climate, there is no need to fear as God is in control and Christ is sustaining the world (CH4:INT7, CH3:INT6, CH2:INT2). In addition that it is real but overstated, with the media trying to frighten people to 'convert to being all for the environment' (CH4:INT6). In this sense it was seen as the way society was going and not influenced by normative theology, but by science and broader societal discourses such as environmentalism, fuelling human fear. In addition, a belief that humans are only speeding up what happens anyway. It was even mentioned that the effects of climate change might be more beneficial than dangerous, such as warmer weather (CH3:INT1). The fact that around half of respondents stated they believe in human induced climate change therefore does not tell the whole picture. The number who would have stated that this is a very serious issue that requires a serious coordinated international response would have been very few (CH2:INT1, CH2:INT4). Even those who believed often clarified their position in that God would not let it get too serious as He had His own plan for the end of the world (CH3:INT9), with espoused belief in climate change being clarified in as much as it cannot become so problematic in scale as to challenge a normative theological understanding of God's sovereignty and eschatological plans for the earth.

Figure 17 shows that 40% of respondents stated they did not believe in anthropogenic climate change and the reasons given are presented in Table 17.



TABLE 17: EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD CLIMATE CHANGE (2)

Reasons for not believing or uncertainty in anthropogenic climate change
Only see climate change as part of natural cycles: Earth's cycles (weather) in hands of the Creator
Sun's rays responsible
Climate always changed just as God planned
Trying to get everyone taken up by a dominant theme, make us all 'green': drawing us away from the gospel
Climate change proponents worshipping created rather than Creator
Fallacy created by humans with high up ulterior motives (climate change a smokescreen) to gain control of the population (force people into certain lifestyles)
Not enough long term records: never been proved
Future of the earth is in God's hands not how much oil we burn
Evidence the anti-Christ is coming: climate change created by the 'one world order' to put fear in people
No need to worry about rising sea levels as God in control of it all, even if it was true we could move to higher ground
Do not put Christian consciences at mercy of latest scientific data as this changes over time
We do not know enough yet: jury still out
More interested in local issues that impact us
Two sides to the debate with their own evidence: hard to know which is right

In Table 17 it can be seen that normative theological drives result in an evident position of discord with broader societies understanding of climate change. For many conservative evangelicals, refusing to believe in or engage with climate change reveals an espoused and operant theology with multi-faceted normative theological roots. In effect, normative theology again acts as the thermostat drawing conservative evangelicals back from engagement with numerous forces and fears that different normative theological foundations elicit. Elements of the evangelical environmental quadrilateral and other complicating drives laid out in Chapter 6 lower concern and are given as reasons not to believe or engage with the issue. These include God's sovereignty, evangelism, eschatology, a fear of environmentalism and reservations over science disciplines. The main arguments given were that there has always been a natural climate change related to such things as changes in the sun's rays and that this was all part of God's sovereignty (CH2:INT7, CH4:INT5, CH3:INT5, CH3:INT2). Some respondents had been influenced by media such as creationist magazines they subscribed to, leaflets produced by Christian members of the U.K. Independence

Party, or Christian DVDs that argued against anthropogenic climate change (CH1:INT1, CH3:INT3).<sup>83</sup> In one way these media sources could be seen as an aspect of formal theology or propaganda acting to steer conservative evangelicals away from engagement with climate change. Specifically, the issue was seen as a danger for evangelicals in that it can attempt to draw people away from the gospel and be taken up with 'green' issues rather than evangelical ones (CH4:INT3), triggering dissonance with normative central positioning of evangelism and attempting to challenge a biblical world-view with an unbiblical one (CH4:INT5). Others simply expressed that as a Christian it was not something that overly interested them or required a response, failing to activate normative understanding of dominion and stewardship and care for other human and non-human creation (CH3:INT8; CH3:INT2; CH1:INT1). Just as with the issue of species extinctions, so again with climate change, God's sovereignty had a central importance. God was seen as the one in charge and permitting this to happen. He could restrain effects but gives humans free will with consequences (CH4:INT7). However, it was these consequences, and human culpability, that seemed to be undeveloped as a theme of espoused theology that could lead to engagement with climate change and species extinctions. In particular, perhaps increased focus from formal theology could help develop notions of human culpability and damage to God's creation that is being done, and to develop more what dominion might mean as an espoused and operant theology for the regenerated conservative evangelical Christian. The clear normative theological roots noted in how conservative evangelicals form attitudes in relation to losses in biological diversity and climate change were, however, not so central with the issue of renewable energy.

## 7:6 EVANGELICALS AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

---

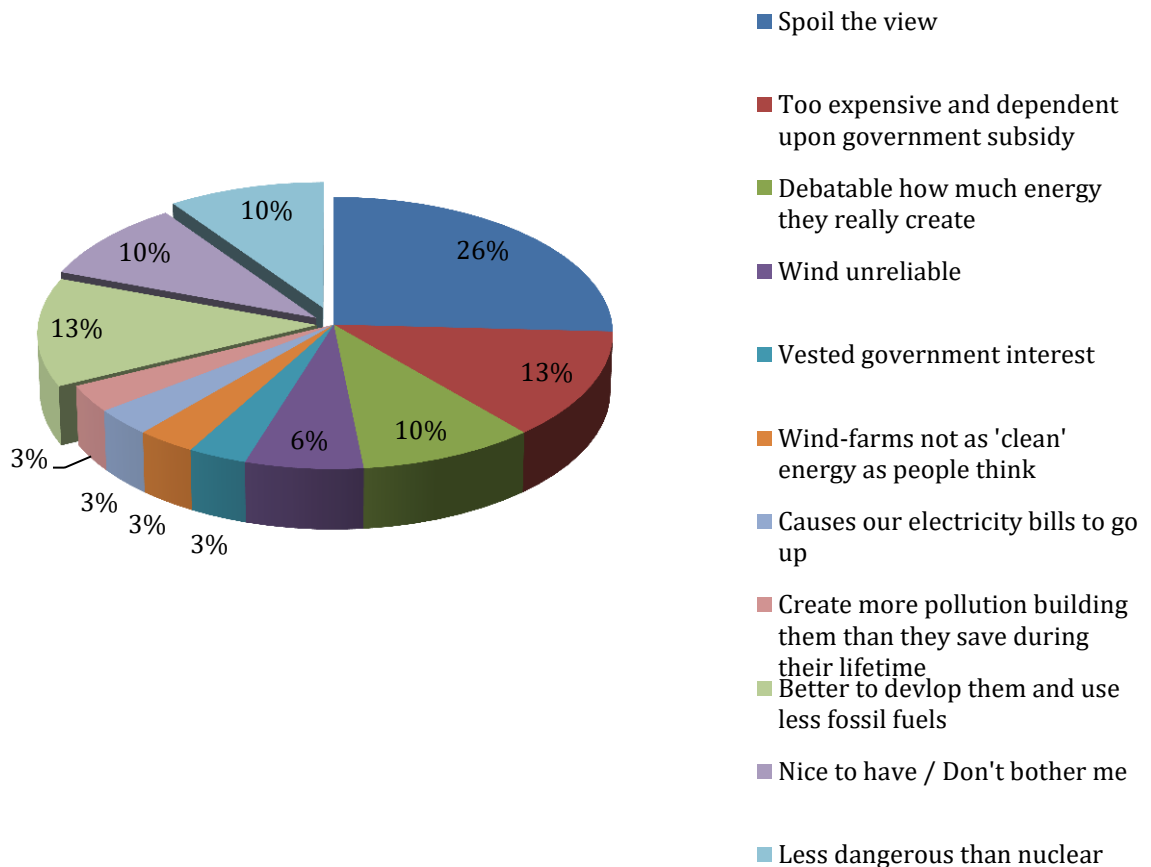
Renewable energy was mentioned by over one-third of respondents (14), particularly wind farms though some mentioned more than one source of renewables. In North Wales wind farm projects can be a divisive issue due to the amount that have been built over recent years, both onshore and offshore, and it is therefore not surprising so many respondents expressed opinions about them. As can be seen in Figure 18 around two-thirds of opinions given by respondents were against wind farms whilst approximately one-third were in favour of them. This single issue therefore represents

---

<sup>83</sup> These DVDs include *'The Great Global Warming Swindle'*, (2007) and a number of presentations by the Creationist John Mackay, including *'Climate Change and Creation: A Really Inconvenient Truth'* (2007) and *'Climate Change: The God Factor'* (2008). In addition, creationist magazines included those with the following titles: *'Creation'*, *'Acts & Facts'* and *'Answers'*.

the most sceptical position for conservative evangelicals of the three case studies chosen. Yet despite this issue being the most sceptical for conservative evangelicals, attitudes interestingly do not have the same obvious normative theological drives that were strongly noted with species extinctions and climate change. Therefore, certain environmental issues evidence a much closer tie to normative teachings in Scripture than others. With renewable energy, normative influences are weak and connections can only be made more distantly. For renewable energy, as seen in Figure 26, a variety of inputs were identified but these mostly have non-normative drives.

FIGURE 18: EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD WIND FARMS



It is therefore not just normative theology that can lead to a lack of engagement with environmental issues, as seen with climate change and species extinctions above. However, it could also be that

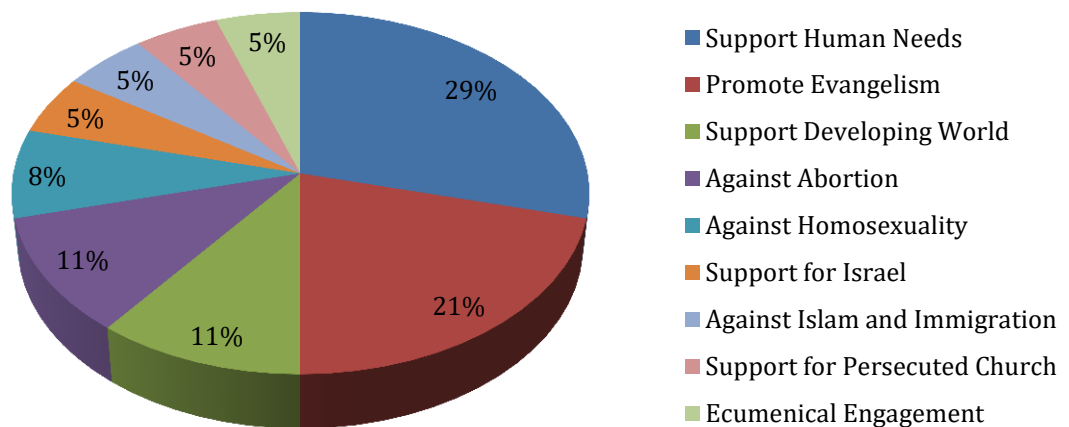
drives are not as explicit and could be masked with it being more difficult to trace deeper roots further back. For instance it could be that renewable energy is seen as the 'operant voice' of a societal drive for sustainability which normative theology does not have the level of detail to incorporate.

Those in favour often compared them to other less desirable forms of energy production such as nuclear (CH4:INT8) or finite resources that are being used up such as coal and oil (CH1:INT2, CH4:INT3). Some just mentioned they did not mind seeing them around and that they understood 'it was the way to go' (CH4:INT2). Most evangelicals who were against wind farms were so on aesthetic principles, that they simply spoilt the view (CH2:INT6, CH4:INT1). A tentative link here can be made to normative theology in as much as this could be seen as interfering with or spoiling God's creation. This could also be linked to how conservative evangelicals see rural environments as overwhelmingly more desirable than urban ones: with wind turbines being seen as an 'industrial infringement' upon rural areas. The second most important reason was that they were too expensive and reliant upon government subsidy (CH3:INT4) linked to another reason in that it is resulting in electricity bills going up, despite claims over previous decades that it would be harnessing free power from the wind (CH4:INT7). Others contested the claims of how much electricity they actually generated, that they were perhaps unreliable and were regularly seen to be not turning even when it was windy (CH4:INT5). Others thought it was unwise to rely on wind when often there was very little for long periods of time (CH3:INT5). Generally, though being mentioned on fewer occasions, evangelical responses to other forms of renewable energy were more positive such as solar panels (CH2:INT9, CH3:INT4, CH3:INT7) and hydro-power from dams (CH1:INT1), rivers and estuaries (CH3:INT8), or wave power (CH4:INT5, CH3:INT5). Harnessing power from the sea was seen as a way of using power created by God in a way that did not spoil the view in comparison to wind turbines (CH3:INT5). Likewise, solar energy was seen as less obtrusive (CH3:INT4) and encouraged with financial incentives, again pointing to the power of legislation to shape environmental attitudes (CH3:INT7). It did not seem that interviewees on the whole attempted to link these attitudes toward renewables with their faith or normative theological understanding. It is another area where future formal theology could attempt to develop faith-based stewardship, and to think more deeply about how stewardship can be put into practise and how it can be linked to a biblically based sustainability. The three case studies above of species extinctions, climate change and renewable energy have highlighted the levels of influence that normative theology can have in resultant operant and espoused positions. Further understanding can be gained about the influence of normative theology on operant and espoused positions by identifying those things which conservative evangelicals do feel require their concerted attention as a corporate and private expression of their faith.

## 7:7 WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOVE GOD? THE NATURE OF EVANGELICAL BURDENS

Participant observation and conducting interviews showed how conservative evangelicals have a number of priorities, concerns or commitments, that they feel burdened for and are glad to address them in areas such as support through prayer, or in physical ways such as in the giving of their time, energy and finances. In having a section outlining those burdens that emerged, it is hoped that this data can provide further insights into the four voices of theology and how these relate to conservative evangelical concerns and in addition if this can help further explain what part creation care plays in the life of evangelicals. For instance, a strong and determined focus upon certain issues could result from clearer normative theology addressing these issues and may result in neglect of other issues that have less clear engagement with conservative evangelicals due to more complex, or less evident, normative theological drives. More than half of interviewees were coded as presenting a specific burden they had during interviews as can be seen in Figure 19. Each of these concerns were identified as an operant theology which was linked in some way to their interpretation of relevant normative theology, as specifically gleaned from the Bible.

FIGURE 19: EVANGELICAL BURDENS



Other things mentioned by just one respondent each included the following: being against IVF treatments and euthanasia, helping Christian blind people, supporting creationism organisations, and having a deep interest in the environment. In many respects evangelism is top of the agenda for

all evangelicals as was seen in Chapter 6:4, but coding here is showing people actively involved with projects or organisations either through their church or individually. The issue of supporting Israel, through the group 'Pray for Israel' was mainly apparent in one of the four churches and is informed by normative theology such as Genesis 12:2-3 (that those who bless Israel shall be blessed) and Romans 11:24-26 (that Israel's fate is tied in with God's eschatological plans). The persecuted church often involved signing up to newsletters and supporting, either financially or through prayer, Christians living in places where it is dangerous to practice their faith. Organisations supported included those such as the 'Barnabas Fund', and 'OpenDoors', and as Christian interest groups publishing their own material, this could be seen as an aspect of formal theology having influence. In addition, normative theological teaching bears testimony to Christian persecution being a strong part of church history, going back to that instigated by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1-3) and after his conversion, meted out to Paul himself (Acts 9:29, 13:50). Pastoral teaching also included teaching about Christian persecution (CH2:SERM4, CH1:SERM12). Some evangelicals were actively against the practise of homosexuality and abortion, with the former being informed by normative theology such as Leviticus 18:22, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and the latter by Exodus 21: 22-25 and warned against in explicit church teaching (CH2:SERM6, CH4:SERM23). As well as being verbally against these activities as an espoused theology, some were further involved as an operant theology with such things as lobbying their local MP or handing out petitions to sign in churches. A small number were actively opposed to immigration and the resultant effects of the rise of Islam in the United Kingdom because of this. This can be linked to normative theological understanding of Jesus being seen as the only way to God (John 14:6) and broader church teaching warning about false spiritual beliefs (CH2:SERM2, CH1:SERM10). Only one respondent seemed to have a specific burden for stewardship, attempting to lead a life with a greater level of sensitivity toward the environment, influencing how his family travelled, where they took a holiday, and the kind of home they lived in.

Perhaps one surprising result shows the amount of respondents who expressed an interest in the developing world. In part, this resulted from a number of respondents having previously lived in developing countries and who were therefore more aware and sympathetic to the needs of a specific area. In terms of the four voices of theology, this shows how a person's biography can lead to more engagement with specific issues and is a further example of the 'lens of contextualisation' which influences the normative-espoused-operant axis. Others helping charities with financial contributions, were very emotionally involved after having visited orphanages themselves, and saw this as an expression of their Christian faith in their operant theology in following what the Bible says about looking after widows and orphans (James 1:27) (CH4:INT2).

As well as specifically expressing concern for the developing world in particular, human physical needs more generally were also focused upon. Explicit examples of evangelicals having a burden for human needs was generally a positioning 'counter' to non-human needs of things such as animals. Evangelicals chose jobs involved with helping people (CH1:INT3, CH4:INT4, CH4:INT5) and expressed a preference to act out their faith in helping humans when they are in need (CH4:INT7, CH2:INT5, CH3:INT5), linked to anthropocentric drives noted in Chapter 6:7.

It is clear just from these observations that evangelical Christians do not have an active 'burden' for creation stewardship, apart from the one anomaly, and it does not therefore figure explicitly within how they express the central aspects of their Christian faith. In terms of the four voices of theology, normative theological interpretations lead them to have an operant theological burden for some issues, yet an operant and espoused resistance to others. Seeing things that are more important to them, that take their time and resources, is one way of highlighting how evangelicals prioritise. Certain issues can gain momentum or decrease in importance at different times in their life, yet central to this has to be the resonating influence of normative theological drives and their interpretations. In this respect creation stewardship could move higher in levels of importance in the future, as normative theology is further drawn upon and negotiated in a more favourable way, perhaps with the aid of increased attention from formal theology. This can be seen by highlighting how, even during the interview encounter itself, a number of people seemed to change their position, as presented in Table 18.

TABLE 18: EXAMPLES OF CHANGING ATTITUDES DURING INTERVIEWS

	INTERVIEW A	INTERVIEW B	INTERVIEW C
Opinions Expressed Early in Interview	<p>I am not strongly concerned about environmental problems. I do not recycle, I do not like wind farms, I do not believe in human induced climate change and am not that bothered if species become extinct. Certainly not been involved with conservation during my lifetime. Society gets too 'het up' about the environment. World in state of decay, and the End Times coming soon. Consequently I am not that worried about trying to preserve the earth. Becomes an idol to society. Christian gospel far greater than all these things.</p>	<p>CC: Should there be Christian organisations that promote environmental stewardship?</p> <p>RESP: I think it is right to look after creation generally, but not for a Christian organisation to focus upon this issue: there is enough people in the world for that. Christians should help people in need and spread the gospel. OK to financially support secular environmental NGOs, but not right for Christian organisation to solely protect creation. Waste of Christian energy and time, as no Christian organisation can 'save the planet'.</p>	<p>As Christians we should be interested in people's physical and spiritual needs. That is what matters; issues to do with creation are subsidiary. I hate to hear about loads of money being left by people to animal charities. All this money being wasted on trying to save pandas: what nonsense. So what if we lose pandas, it's all part of a broken fallen world. I would question the sanity of anyone giving money to help animals over humans. I have eternal life and death matters to think about. My money and time will go on people. It is not an area Christians lead in. Are there any Christian environmental organisations? Historically, it has all been done wrong 'people seen as the problem that need eradicating'. We could put all our money and effort into saving creation and it won't change a thing. God created us different and cares for us more than animals.</p>
Opinions Expressed Later in Interview	<p>God created man different from the animals, a tripartite being: body, soul and spirit, giving him a soul, and dominion over the other things. Like farming cattle and sheep. I'm starting to think now, like stewardship, so I ought to be concerned about extinctions. Like zoos</p>	<p>CC: [shows information about Care of Creation]</p> <p>RESP: I see, well it's good to have such a Christian organisation to have knowledge and teach about things such as increasing awareness of environmental issues within the church, to try</p>	<p>Environmental stewardship is not taken seriously enough by churches. Genesis tells us we are custodians and to look after it. God declared His creation good. Sanctification should change our relationship to creation, to care more. Like a child adopted by a loving father then given land to look after. You respect him by protecting it. I am now thinking</p>



	<p>practise breeding endangered animals. Exercising dominion is a God given directive that should concern us. Part of building people up in the faith as it is a biblical teaching. Families should think more about exercising dominion. Regenerated people should care about animals' well-being. I'm thinking more deeply about the topic now than I normally would have done.</p>	<p>and stop land degradation and deforestation in Africa. As long as it helps the betterment of people. We should be more aware of these types of ministries going on in Africa and churches could perhaps financially support them.</p>	<p>more than I have ever done about it. If we are saved we are stating creation is designed to be part of God's voice: a 'book of works' as well as the Bible, 'book of words'. When things break off, become extinct, He has less of a voice. Sacrilegious not to protect it, like destroying hymns and Scripture designed to edify us. I am now joining the dots, making logical conclusions, thinking it through.</p>
Main Changes Noted	<p>Thinking about what dominion means for evangelicals, a teaching given by God, resulting in rethinking attitudes toward creation and caring more about the plight of species.</p>	<p>From being against Christian organisations that promote environmental stewardship, to being for them.</p>	<p>Thinking through clearly what stewardship could actually mean. Elevate importance of environmental protection from something of an irritant with no interest in to something that a Christian deserves to offer a serious and heartfelt response.</p>
Possible Reasons For Change	<p>Despite being evangelical for several decades, first time to think of 'what does dominion and stewardship mean to me'?</p>	<p>Shown literature about Christian creation care organisations; first time to think about what they do and why, and be aware of their existence.</p>	<p>Something ignored from Christian life previously, therefore having a lack of awareness, knowledge, teaching and understanding. Prompted to seriously think about the issue: which results in the formation of positive conclusions.</p>

In terms of the four voices of analysis, these three interviews show that normative theological interpretation at first created a dissonance with creation stewardship, with the thermostat idea bringing the respondents away from explicit concern for creation. Yet after giving the issue greater thought and in particular mining further normative theology, it is as if the thermostat of normative theology is reset in a place which then allows creation care to be integrated into operant and espoused theology in a positive way. This feeds back into our understanding of the four voices model in the following ways. Normative theology can not only be interpreted differently leading to various espoused and operant positions in relation to the environment, but it can be rethought and

renegotiated and in effect woven into a new more engaged position with regards to caring for creation. Normative theology, in acting as a thermostat in directing espoused and operant theology, can remove creation care from the remit of the church and draw individuals away from engagement but the same thermostat can be reset which then has the power to bring caring for creation back into focus as an issue that requires a Christian response. This adds greater complexity to the initial modified four voices model of theological analysis. These changes occurring in the space of an hour or less were only evident in a small number of interviews, but it remains possible that others, over a longer period of time may have thought more deeply about Christian environmental stewardship. In effect, normative theology can regulate creation care out or regulate it in. It is perhaps the latter that I would argue requires further attention and increased input from formal theology. One area that can act as a catalyst for such change is in relation to legislation and government directives, as conservative evangelicals generally see God as the one who established governments and that their laws are to be obeyed, unless directly opposing Scripture.

#### 7:8 CITIZENS AS WELL AS CHRISTIANS: ADHERENCE TO ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

---

Some thirteen interviewees mentioned legislation specifically to do with the environment. Results show that the avenue of law that is established by the state is generally a positive arena for the establishment of more environmentally sensitive practices amongst conservative evangelicals. This is closely linked to Scripture that teaches Christians ought to obey the ordinances of government, unless they contradict the Bible and in this way normative church teaching clearly links to individual espoused and operant theology. Yet it is a further very clear example of how normative theology can teach something general (in obeying the law) which is then implemented in a specific context beyond the initial normative teaching (with environmental themes). The Christian position on obeying the law was summed up clearly by Mark, and that recycling was therefore a good thing:

I think we are commanded that we need to obey all the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake. So any ordinances or commands that government give us, we ought to obey. So when it comes down to the individual level, there's recycling, it seems fully in line with Scripture for instance and it seems like this is what the government is commanding us to do then my responsibility is clear on that and the responsibility of the church. We need to obey the government because God is the one who sets up the government, and if they make rules or laws, as long as they are not directly against Scripture, we ought to obey them (Mark, aged 38, CH3:INT10).

The issue of practising recycling faithfully because it was what the council encouraged and expected had also made others more faithful in how they sorted their household waste (CH2:INT6, CH3:INT1). Whilst others openly admitted they did not recycle before it became mandatory and that Christians could learn from secular organisations such as local councils (CH4:INT7). Obeying government laws therefore results in positive espoused and operant theology that can help protect the environment.

Breaking the law would of course be seen as a sin within evangelical circles, apart from in rare situations. The power of the law, and not wishing to be seen as doing something illegal, can also perhaps infringe upon biblical injunctions; or specifically that one aspect of normative theology can be trumped or replaced by another. One interviewee saw the Bible as giving man 'authority to kill and eat' anything he liked in the animal kingdom, as all food was declared clean. Yet he concluded that due to different cultural practices and national laws this practice was no longer possible, and that if a government legislated against the killing of an animal, or even a plant, then evangelicals had to obey this (CH2:INT1), as a further aspect of normative theology, in legislative obedience. This could be seen as an aspect of normative theology becoming more civilised, being regulated or evolving, yet interestingly not because of non-biblical reasons, but for further biblical reasons. This feeds back into our understanding of the four voices model in that changes can happen when normative theology is drawn upon, as the thermostat is still effective but is repositioned. With regards to environmental protection, again this has obvious benefits for things such as the conservation of endangered species. This view was expressed by another interviewee who had witnessed the slaughter of African Elephants for ivory and was very much in support of government and non-governmental organisations active in trying to stop the practice (CH4:INT2). Whilst another who had spent his life as a carpenter put forward the view that although trees should be used for this purpose, they should be adequately replanted and therefore was in support of organisations such as the Forestry Stewardship Council and legislation promoting the wise use of forest resources (CH4:INT1). Another mentioned the improvements to the River Mersey, previously having been one of the most polluted rivers in Britain, with factories dumping waste, but had now been cleaned up due to more stringent legislative controls (CH1:INT6). Another, having personal knowledge of the Aberfan Disaster in South Wales, pointed out how this had been caused by human mismanagement and that great strides had been made since then, with governmental legislation and projects to improve industrial sites and the management of industrial waste (CH2:INT3). Another had personally worked in 'the smogs of London' and also saw how things were being sorted out now, from a governmental level (CH1:INT2). Whilst another who had suffered many years of failing health due to asbestos poisoning from working in the boiler rooms of ships whilst young, thought it a great improvement that we now had more stringent Health and Safety laws (CH3:INT5). In these multiple

examples, people's espoused and operant theology seems to be informed by their personal observation and experience of environmental impacts in combination with their attitudes and normative understanding towards legislation, and is another example of the 'lens of contextualisation'. In personally observing degradation and its subsequent tackling, an espoused theology in favour of increased control and care is made. Although not mentioned by respondents, such improvements could also have normative theological links to sin and exercising dominion.

On some occasions conservative evangelicals did express views against legislation to do with the environment, and although this was rare, it did surface (CH3:INT7, CH4:INT10). In these instances laws can trigger resistance if they are seen to counter other normative theological teachings. As well as leading to a harmonious espoused and operant theology, it can also therefore lead to tension and resistance. One example of this was specifically resistance to legislation to tackle climate change which was seen in apocalyptic terms (CH3:INT7). Another example of evangelical wariness over environmental legislation was expressed when human needs are made subordinate to those of non-humans, such as birds or animals, negatively affecting human employment. One example given was how parts of the logging industry were shut down in North America due to a species of owl reportedly becoming endangered (CH4:INT10). Human employment therefore suffered in preference to the protection of bird life. Further examples being such things as people being refused planning permission on their own land, due to some species of bird or bat being found to nest nearby (CH4:INT10). In these instances, it seems that the biblical mandate for humans to 'fill the earth and subdue it' may be put in conflict with a greater awareness and legislative support to non-human creation. This balance or trade-off, and 'feelings of uneasiness' that could ensue in the evangelical mind-set were also noted by others (CH3:INT10).

#### 7:9 DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AS PREDICTORS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

---

Figure 1 (p.11) in the literature review showed how certain demographic variables can be used as predictors of increased levels of environmental concern amongst the population at large. However, research also suggested that when these demographic predictors are combined they rarely account for more than 15% of the variability noted (Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.734). One might expect that in the present study, focusing upon conservative evangelical Christians and the powerful place they give to normative theology and specifically the Bible in their lives, variations in attitudes caused by demographic and biographical differences would not be so evident or tangible.

However, although not following strictly those patterns evident in broader society, it has been possible to notice correlations that are significant, especially when adding other possible variants which are explicitly in relation to the target group. Being a qualitative study, using a sample number of 37 interviews, rather than a quantitative study, it is not intended to provide statistical correlations based upon such relatively small numbers. However, there is value in identifying general trends and giving possible reasons for such differences. The following variables have all been analysed: age, gender, education, ethnicity, church background, length of time an evangelical, and whether lay or leadership.

Perhaps surprisingly it was hard to decipher much difference due to age, particularly as more generally in the population at large younger people may be more environmentally aware. One noticeable area though could be in relation to climate change, in that younger interviewees more commonly believed this a reality. No real significant difference was noted due to gender. Higher educational attainment was correlated with higher levels of awareness and care for the environment, especially amongst those with graduate and post-graduate science degrees, as there seemed to be more of a willingness to engage with scientific research on environmental topics such as climate change and losses in biological diversity. Interestingly ethnicity seemed to be one of the strongest predictors on concern. Particularly those from ethnic minorities who had a previous background living in developing countries, due to personal experiences of seeing environmental degradation, such as deforestation, land degradation, soil infertility and flooding, had led to a heightened sense of awareness of the effects environmental problems can have. Perhaps those spending their whole lives in more affluent countries had more of a restricted view of ecological problems further afield that presently do not affect their everyday lives. Increased concern was noted from respondents who had previously lived in Nigeria, South Africa and the Philippines. This could be related to findings in the literature review that pointed towards local environmental concerns fostering greater engagement with Christians than international concerns (Eckberg and Blocker, 1989, p.514; Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.746). I have made this connection because those interviewees from ethnic minorities, although now living in the U.K., still held memories of local environmental destruction in places they had lived prior.

Interestingly, church background was another variable with some noticeable characteristics. A number of respondents had previous experience in Anglican churches, and it was evident they expressed less extreme positions toward the environment. This could be due to Anglicanism having a long history of engagement with social issues, which the environment could be seen as a part of, whereas traditional conservative evangelical churches concentrate more solely on spiritual issues,

therefore expressing normative theology differently. In this context, interviewees may bring with them aspects of their previous backgrounds which are assimilated with their present church identity. However, it could also be that their Anglican background had been more theologically liberal and that their positions in relation to the environment were therefore less informed by the application of normative theology. It was also identified that those who were more recently converted to the conservative evangelical tradition expressed higher levels of sensitivity to environmental concern. This is perhaps a telling occurrence in that normative theology, evangelical doctrines and theological engagement may result in less environmental concern. One final variable that was looked into was that between the lay congregation and those in leadership positions. Although ethnographic observation concluded that environmental stewardship did not feature in church teaching, this did not seem to be something on the whole that congregants desired to see changed, although some thought it should be given greater credence. However, the few interviews that purported higher environmental concern were from people who were not in leadership positions. Church leaders were also vocal in expressing concern over the environmental movement.

## 7:10 CONCLUSION

---

In Chapter 7, I have shown how conservative evangelicals corporately evidenced a plethora of environmentally friendly lifestyle choices (Table 12). I have also shown how respondents noted numerous environmental issues, totalling 23, during the interview encounter (Table 13). I have also provided a detailed focus upon environmental attitudes and behaviours in relation to the three case studies of climate change, species extinctions and renewable energy. In having used the modified four voices model of theological reflection two areas have been addressed in this chapter, and now I will draw these themes together in conclusion. Firstly, the ways in which the four voices template aids in understanding what is happening with the data presented and secondly how this increases understanding of how the model actually works in finer detail. In these ways I have identified seven different categories, though each of these often incorporate two sides or components. Firstly, in that normative theology is responsible for both espoused and operant theologies of engagement with some environmental issues yet disengagement with others. Secondly, certain environmental issues draw upon normative theology more strongly than others, with espoused and operant responses being more doctrinally rich. Thirdly, that when different aspects of normative theology are brought to bear upon an individual issue, this can be done in a harmonious way which leads to positive espoused and operant responses and also in a disharmonious and fractious way, leading to uncertain

and tense espoused and operant theology. Fourthly, that the same normative theology is utilised by people in the same group but can lead to opposite espoused and operant theology. Fifthly, the formation of environmental attitudes and behaviours is complicated by what I have termed the 'lens of contextualisation', in that such things as personal experiences and circumstances can be identified as an addition to the four voices of theology, between normative and espoused/operant theology. Sixth, a normative trigger leads to a more detailed espoused and operant theology than is evident within the initial normative teaching, and finally, knowledge of normative theology is often espoused in relation to what conservative evangelicals see in the lifestyles of broader society.

The fact that there are a multitude of inputs or layers of influence from within normative theological understanding means that the conservative evangelical position is far from homogenous as different people give more or less weight to different normative stimulants when expressing their espoused and operant theologies. From this data it can be seen that different environmental issues elicit normative theology in different ways: in leading to resonance or dissonance with biblical themes. Or to explain in more detail, conservative evangelicals when responding to environmental challenges within their espoused and operant theology, draw upon normative theology, in their relationship with and interpretation of normative theology, in two broadly distinct ways. Firstly in that normative theology is implicated in the development of a resistance to, or dissonance with, the environmental issue, as expressed in espoused and operant theologies that prevent engagement. Secondly, that normative theology is drawn upon in a way that resonates and seems 'in line' with the environmental issue leading to a normative basis for engagement. For instance, normative theology strongly leads to espoused and operant theologies that counteract materialism, as worldliness, sin and greed, and the anti-spiritual slide of society. It is also seen as an aspect of applying wisdom in lifestyle choices, to respect creation and be impact conscious, to give rather than consume, to follow a life of simplicity and modesty, to conserve the balances put in place by God and to resist the temptation for personal possessions but rather invest in God's purposes such as redemption. A further example would be the issue of GM technology. All respondents who mentioned this issue were against this technology. Specifically in relation to GM, when humans are seen to interfere too greatly with God's creation, normative theology resonates strongly, catalysing a drive for preventative espoused and operant theologies. However, with other issues such as climate change and to a lesser extent species extinctions, conservative evangelicals grapple with a marked dissonance with normative theology, resulting in scepticism and a more disengaged operant and espoused theology. For instance, 53% of respondents were either not believing in or expressed uncertainty toward anthropogenic climate change (Figure 17), and 30% expressed the view that species extinctions do not matter (Figure 16). Normative theology such as God's sovereignty,

eschatology and evangelism all being evident in leading to a resistance to positive engagement with the issue.

Secondly, some environmental issues draw upon normative theology more deeply than others, such as climate change and species extinctions where links are clearly evident in comparison to renewable energy where normative drives to attitudes were less prevalent. Yet despite attitudes to wind farms not having the same clear normative drive as something like climate change, a high level of scepticism was identified with 70% of respondents being against renewable energy projects in the form of wind farms (Figure 18). Also issues such as vegetarianism that do not trigger a strong normative theological input of support, figure more rarely and are seen as more problematic in a Christian context. Yet although links to normative theology were less evident with renewable energy, on the whole normative theology wields great power and authority, and there is a desire from respondents to be obedient and shaped in their espoused and operant positions rather than live lives that would be seen as being in friction with normative teachings. For some environmental issues, such as climate change and species extinctions, the evangelical environmental quadrilateral mentioned in the previous chapter, or doctrinal normative theology, is clearly evident as a precursor to espoused and operant theologies. However, for other issues such as deforestation, water and air pollution, factory farming and animal cruelty, responses seem to engage more positively and freely from the negative doctrinal aspects previously mentioned, and draw more upon dominion and stewardship. Further complicating issues mentioned in Chapter 6 also acted as positive drives, such as anthropocentrism resulting in fear of threats to human health from damage to the ecosystem and obedience to environmental legislation.

Thirdly, at times different aspects of normative theology are brought together in a harmonious and reinforcing way in relation to espoused and operant theology; such as exercising stewardship and the related teaching of being against materialism, or exercising stewardship which is reinforced by obedience to laws. The desire of conservative evangelicals to obey governmental laws as long as they do not obviously contradict Scripture shows how powerful normative theological influence can be in shaping operant theology. The ordinances of government being a positive way in which conservative evangelicals can be persuaded to adjust lifestyle practices to be more environmentally friendly, with clear normative theological roots. Yet at other times normative theology, in application to environmental issues, can be an arena for discord between different normative teachings. For instance, friction and resistance can be more apparent with legislation that may impinge upon anthropocentric undercurrents as when non-human concerns seemingly are given a higher status than human concerns.



Fourthly, normative theology can be drawn upon to qualify often competing or divergent espoused and operant theologies rather than leading to a uniform position from interviewees as can be seen in numerous instances with attitudes toward climate change. It was also evident within attitudes to population growth and pesticide use, as when normative teaching is applied in the contemporary context, divergent themes or positions emerge: a diversity of operant and espoused theology, yet such diversity is still rich in normative theology. Aspects of normative theology, when applied to the environment, can therefore be an arena for discord, both in when different aspects of normative theology are applied to a single issue, and when one aspect of normative theology is used in the formation of different espoused and operant theology by congregants. Normative theology can also act within trade-off transactions between one another. Incongruence within the hierarchy of voices was uncommon, but did surface between espoused and operant positions in relation to wanting to promote the welfare of farmed animals, being against animal cruelty, and having positive attitudes toward organic principles, and then failing to follow this through to changed consumption and consumer patterns.

Fifthly, engagement or disengagement with environmental issues can also be aided by non-normative inputs such as financial costs or benefits and personal experiences. More specifically that when conservative evangelicals draw upon normative theology, personal circumstances and experiences form what I have termed a 'lens of contextualisation', influencing the interpretation of normative theology into espoused and operant positions. Examples include a lack of personal finances mitigating engagement with environmental issues that respondents acknowledge are normatively warranted; witnessing and being personally affected by environmental destruction leading to a more thoroughly articulated espoused and more strongly implemented operant theology. So although demographic variables as predictors of environmental attitudes and behaviours are less prevalent within this group than the population at large, respondents from ethnic minorities, or those who had spent a considerable amount of time living abroad, seemed to present more engaging positions in relation to environmental concern.

Sixthly, as also noted in Chapters 5 and 6, it is evident that a normative theological root triggers a response but then this is applied and fleshed out in far more detail by interviewees in their espoused and operant theologies than is evident within the initial normative teaching, as both the Bible and church teaching lack such details. Respondents often engaged in biblical gleaning during the interview encounter to identify normative links to environmental attitudes and behaviours. This was seen with attitudes toward materialism and in implementing dominion whereby the initial normative teaching is then espoused and applied in finer detail in relation to the environment than

is recognisable from a purely normative theological starting point. Furthermore, although often a clear linear structure of normative, espoused and operant theologies are evident, the normative root is in the main from someone's personal Bible study rather than from pastoral teaching or other normative sources. Yet in other instances memory of a general teaching from a corporate context is then applied with a different focus upon the environment during the interview encounter.

Finally, also as in previous data chapters, respondents attempt to apply normative theology within their espoused theology in what they see others doing or not doing, specifically in relation to what they see as a broader non-Christian culture that is drifting away from God, having no normative theological anchor. In this way normative theology is espoused as a prescription of what people who are deemed as not Christian may need, when observing the lives of others. Espoused theology is therefore not just the theology embedded within 'what people say they do' but also the theology embedded within what they see others do or not do. In addition, espoused theology is also theology embedded within broader personal discourses such as memories, thoughts, reflections and feelings, covering the past, present and future. The workings of the four voices model of theological reflection are therefore far more complex than previously thought. The task now is to evaluate the findings of the data presented in Chapters 5-7, in relation to the findings in existing literature presented in Chapter 2.

## CHAPTER 8: CONTEXTUALISING THE DATA

---

### 8:1 INTRODUCTION: EVANGELICALS IN DIALOGUE

---

The ethnographer's task is not only to collect information from the emic, or insider's perspective, but also to make sense of all that data from an etic, or external social scientific, perspective (Fetterman, 2010, p.11).

Contextualising data involves placing observations that have been made into a larger perspective, which enables the bigger picture and relevance of the research endeavour to be better understood (Fetterman, 2010, p.19). The ethnographer can move from the insider position whilst collecting data, then step back to more of an outsider position, when evaluating that data in the context of broader academic material. In Chapter 8, I will contextualise the data presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, by placing it in dialogue with findings of the literature review completed in Chapter 2, to highlight both comparisons and contrasts. I will then confirm current knowledge in some instances, with findings that support the previous conclusions of other researchers, and re-affirm these by providing new evidence to support these claims, or additional detail and information to explain what is happening and why. In addition, some data will question observations and conclusions of previous research and offer alternative explanations and even descriptions of new phenomena. This comparing of my own empirical work with the empirical work of others will provide an up-to-date understanding based upon authentic observation and interaction. I will show how my own research has furthered understanding at multiple points.

### 8:2 DIALOGUE WITH PREVIOUS QUANTITATIVE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

---

The literature review showed how certain demographical trends in society at large were identified as being associated with environmental concern. Of the six variables presented in Figure 1 (having a younger age, being politically liberal, having urban residence, a higher education, higher income, and being a woman), only higher educational attainment would be evident to some degree within this study as being correlated with increased concern and this was most noticeable with science graduates and specifically with a belief in the reality of anthropogenic climate change, as evidenced by five interviewees. In addition, a small number of interviewees noted how their limited finances resulted in them focusing upon human concerns rather than more engagement with broader environmental issues. Having a younger age did not seem to lead to increased concern, as some

might expect. This project therefore increases previous understanding, in that conservative evangelicals have unique identifying factors, as to the reasons for their environmental attitudes and behaviours. This was covered in more detail in Chapter 7:9, showing how rather than following broader societal trends, of paramount importance for conservative evangelicals is normative theology of the Bible being the strongest precursor to environmental attitudes and behaviours. However, more particular biographical variables such as ethnicity or having spent time in developing countries with exposure to environmental problems increased concern, as evidenced in four interviews. This would support the findings of Chawla (1998, cited in Kollmus and Agerman, 2002, p.251), that being exposed to the effects of environmental degradation increases environmental concern.

In addition, those with more liberal church backgrounds prior to joining a conservative evangelical church expressed more concern, as was evidenced in six interviews, which confirms literature review findings that liberal protestant denominations have historically engaged more with social issues (Johnson, 1967), and more recently with the environment. I have also shown how other variables such as personal financial status can affect environmental concern. The fact that conservative theological engagement can lower concern, as was claimed in the literature review, was also tentatively confirmed in the way that newer converts to the faith, as evidenced in three interviews, seemed to express more concern, perhaps as theological inputs that can lower concern had not yet taken hold to the same extent. However, this needs careful unpacking, as will be detailed below, as some of the measures used to assess concern in the literature review, create a strong bias with biblical teaching such as dominion and human superiority over creation, in promoting the NEP.

The last variable tested was between lay and leadership, and although previous research noted how strongly congregants followed leader's views in conservative churches (Djupe and Hunt, 2009) and how in liberal denominations leadership about the environment positively affected congregants, this study concluded that there was only a negligible difference between the two, perhaps especially noticed in leaders being more vocally wary of broader environmentalism and therefore reluctant to make ecological concern a church issue, as evidenced with five church elders who took part in interviews. This lack of leadership on the issue is in itself a potential obstacle to concern as congregants generally follow the pastoral lead on societal issues and are often reluctant to make any criticism of them, with only two interviewees making a criticism of pastoral leadership in relation to creation, as was seen in Chapter 6:9.

The literature review in Chapter 2 showed that previous work has largely been U.S. based, where some unique identifying factors can be seen in comparison to my own study focusing upon a country like Wales. For instance in the U.S., conservative evangelicalism is far more prevalent, something of the norm and closely tied in with Republican politics, with conservative evangelicals having influence at the highest echelons of power. The way environmental concern is therefore such a politicised issue in the U.S. and a deeply polarising phenomena, is not so strongly evident in the U.K. yet this should be remembered when analysing results of those studies that so heavily focus upon the U.S. and place evangelicals in a poor light in relation to environmental concern. Figure 12 showed how conservative evangelicals scored far lower than other religious groups, such as more liberal Christians. However, some of the measures used and attitudes tested in the literature review focus upon things that in some way contradict biblical teaching or interpretation, resulting in it being highly likely that those trying to live their life by biblical teachings would score lower than other groups, as can be seen with those studies that tested a willingness to move from the DSP to the NEP. However, empirical studies that formed the literature review chapter do not offer detailed understanding of why this is the case or help to explain them, being a further gap that my own research has filled via the detailed presentation of data in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The synthesis of previous studies presented in Chapter 2 confirmed that conservative evangelical Christians score lowest with pro-environmental concern and behaviour, in relation to the measures for religiosity and environmental concern presented in Chapter 2, Figures 5 and 7. I will assess this specifically in light of the eight methods used to assess environmental concern that have been identified in previous studies which will highlight some of their inadequacies. It appears from previous studies that conservative evangelicals are opposed to increased government control/legislation and infringement upon their lifestyles. In relation to this they are opposed to increased taxation for environmental purposes or more generally relinquishing control over how they spend their income. However, although this may be the case in terms of the framing of new or potential laws, my own research discovered how once legislation was in place, conservative evangelicals responded with a high level of obedience, as long as legislation was not deemed to be contrary to Scripture (Chapter 7:8). With 13 interviewees (35% of total) discussing environmental legislation, 11 (72%) were in favour and only two (18%) expressed any reservations. The literature review also showed conservative evangelicals are concerned with employment (with its resultant human wellbeing) rather than placing the protection of the environment as a higher priority. My own research showed how conservative evangelicals prioritise human welfare, being linked to biblical anthropocentrism, with 19 interviews (51% of total) being highly anthropocentric in this way, with seven (37%) directly stating that humans should always be given priority. There was also a

failure to make a connection between a healthy environment and human flourishing as this was only explicitly evidenced within two interviews (Chapter 6:7, p.169). The literature review also identified that conservative evangelicals are much less likely to identify themselves as environmentalist, and this is not surprising as environmental organisations are largely secular, not espousing a Christian world-view or values. My own research also helps explain the seeming incompatibility of traditional Christian and environmental world-views, or at least how my target group process and explicate their understanding of this, with 16 interviews (43% of total) seeing environmental organisations as extreme with radically different world-views to Christianity (Chapter 6:8, p.176), and very mixed views as to the merits of having specifically Christian environmental organisations. Conservative evangelicals also confirm association with a biblically mandated anthropocentrism, whether mastery over nature or stewardship orientations, as evidenced in 19 interviews (51% of total), and are resistant to the tables being turned toward eco-centric values such as equality between all life-forms as no interviews put forward such an egalitarian view (Chapter 6:7-8). This is in relation to the Genesis creation account whereby humans only are created in the image of God. However, anthropocentrism is not necessarily anti-environmental, as has been seen in Chapters 6 and 7, but can promote the reasoning for effective stewardship, in that humans are seen as superior, but one aspect of this is that they can steward the environment. Indeed, dominion within my own sample was more commonly understood in terms of a caring stewardship rather than a domination of nature (Chapter 6:3, p.149), the latter of which was espoused to conservative evangelicals in the literature review. Indeed, 17 out of 19 interviews (89%) coded for anthropocentrism, espoused the view that anthropocentrism should be understood in a caring stewardship. Conservative evangelicals may also have less concern over specific issues, such as pollution, as they perceive that the situation is already being managed to an acceptable level. The experience of living in more affluent countries, where environmental degradation is less evident, may negate concern and awareness, and as my own research noted, a greater concern existed amongst four interviewees (11%) with backgrounds from developing countries in contrast to the 33 interviewees (89%) whose life experience centred around a more affluent Western culture (Chapter 7:9). Conservative evangelicals may have less knowledge on issues because they more generally disagree with society placing science disciplines above the Bible and their faith, with a belief in the superiority of the Bible over science specifically affirmed in 15 interviews (41%). The figure no doubt would have been much higher if all interviewees were probed on the issue as conservative evangelicals do not credit science with ultimate authority on matters such as how humans should interact with nature (Chapter 4:5). This can result in a desire not to be taken up with arguments over climate change and expressing a high

level of scepticism for instance, with 12 out of 29 interviewees (41%) discussing climate change, mentioning science as a precursor to not believing in anthropocentric causes (Table 17).

With regard to environmental behaviours, it is perhaps not that surprising that conservative evangelicals are not so eager or concerned to eat vegetarian food which they would find hard to defend as a biblically deduced norm<sup>84</sup> (Table 9) and of 28 interviews that were coded for themes about animals, only three (11%) showed any previous or present interest in eating vegan or vegetarian food. It is also not surprising conservative evangelicals do not vote for political candidates on environmental grounds, as they find other spiritual and moral issues more pressing (Chapter 7:7 and Figure 19). In addition, they may be less likely to be involved with things such as demonstrations and boycotts as they perceive this to be civil disobedience which goes against biblical teachings regarding support for governmental law and order, with 11 interviews (30%) mentioning their support for governmental environmental laws and a desire for harmonious relationships (Chapter 7:8), as spawned by normative Christian teachings. With the eight measures used I have helped understand how those measures which have put conservative evangelicals in the poorest light with regards to environmental concern, by the quantitative empirical literature, may not either give a full or particularly clear or authoritative account of how they *do* value the environment. With many of the measures used to assess environmental concern it could be predicted in advance that more conservative evangelical groups would score lowest, yet on the other hand it is debatable whether they could categorically label someone as anti-environmental, or as having an uncaring approach to the environment. Christian values may espouse environmental concern in a different format to that adopted by broader society and the measures used in the empirical literature, as I have shown in Chapter 5. To a large extent, previous quantitative empirical work has asked the wrong questions when it comes to conservative evangelical Christians. They ask questions that generate a resistance to traditional Christian views or normative theology, questions that are too precise and lack an openness to allow the authentic voice of conservative evangelicals to emerge. My own research, being conducted upon a foundation of knowledge of both the disciplines of the conservative evangelical faith and the environment, in a real life context rather than with distant surveys, has enabled far greater insight. The use of a flexible interview template that opens up avenues for

---

<sup>84</sup> Rather than taking the original creation account remit with regards to food, from Genesis 1, which some Christian vegetarians may argue from, those in my target group would commonly adhere to post-fall interpretations of humans being given permission to eat animals for food, such as may be deduced from Scriptures such as Genesis 9: 1-3 and Acts 10: 9-16.

potential understanding, rather than closes them down<sup>85</sup> is utilised in this endeavour (see Appendix 4).

Table 19 has been created to compare and contrast smaller findings presented by authors covered in the literature review of quantitative empirical studies with my own data from Chapters 5, 6 and 7. In this way a greater understanding can be gained with numerous issues. From Table 19 it is clear that there is more agreement than disagreement, despite this comparison being one of qualitative against quantitative work. However, the nature of the quantitative studies engaging in complex statistical calculations, then often providing only brief one sentence suggestions as to what the possible causes of any correlations might be, clearly show a lack that my own data has explicated in greater detail. For instance, in the final column of Table 19 I have explained the reasons for congruence or incongruence between the literature review's quantitative studies and my own data. Some previous findings cannot be straightforwardly agreed or disagreed with as the issue is far more nuanced and complex than previous studies suggest, and in uncovering further identifying factors, some findings are confirmed, but for different reasons than given in the studies outlined in the literature review.

---

<sup>85</sup> Survey research, in posing highly specified direct questions often only allowing 'yes or no' responses or selection from a pre-written list, can lead to a narrow understanding by forcing answers often into unrealistic groupings, such as being dichotomous, offering no depth of understanding. This is often the case with the quantitative studies addressing the Christianity and environment relationship.



TABLE 19: IN DIALOGUE WITH CLAIMS OF QUANTITATIVE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Study	Finding	Comparison to Present Study	Further Understanding or Original Insights Gained
Johnson, 1967, p.441	Theology good predictor of attitudes and behaviours amongst Protestant pastors and lay congregants' views. Conservative Christians therefore most interested in preserving their theology	Agree	Although Johnson addressing broader political attitudes, highly evident within environmental attitudes for conservative evangelicals. Chapters 5-7, normative theology shapes attitudes and behaviours. Highly resistant to any perceived 'threat' to their theology, as envisaged from environmentalism. 100% of interviewees defending normative theology
Djupe and Hunt, 2009, pp.675-6	Congregants closely follow pastoral leadership in conservative churches	Agree	Hierarchical structure, congregants follow pastoral lead. Only two interviews (5%) challenged pastoral leadership. Also true that congregants and leaders closely following normative theology which manifests itself in lay and leadership expressing same beliefs
Chawla, 1998, pp.14-15 Truelove and Joireman, 2009, p.815	Exposure to environmental degradation and awareness of negative consequences, increases concern.	Agree	Especially true for those with personal experience of developing countries (four interviews, 11%).
Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.744, 748	Environment/economy trade-off. Human concerns trump non-human.  Less financial resources impact concern.	Agree  Agree	Highly charged anthropocentrism (19 interviews, 51%); human spiritual and physical well-being always prioritised.  Limited finances channelled to human concerns (four interviews, 11%).

<p>Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.749</p>	<p>Biblical conservatives most resistant to 'New Ecological Consciousness'.</p> <p>Biblical conservatives espouse view 'no need to worry about the environment'.</p>	<p>Strongly Agree</p> <p>Agree</p>	<p>Seen as prioritising things in an unbiblical manner. Raising non-human concerns too highly. Deep challenge to anthropocentrism, as 19 interviews (51%) expressed anthropocentric positions but no interviews challenged anthropocentrism. A paradigm shift which is too far for conservative evangelicals. All interviewees see humans different to other life forms and superior.</p> <p>Environmentalists seen as extremist (16 interviews, 43%) who exaggerate (five interviews, 14%). No interviews expressing fear or deep concern. Environment created robust not flimsy, God's sovereign plan for earth will be fulfilled (27 interviews, 73%).</p>
<p>Kannagy and Willets, 1993, p.679</p> <p>Woodrum and Wolkomir, 1997, p.231</p>	<p>Church attendance negatively related to environmental attitudes but not behaviours.</p> <p>Attitudes more hardened than behaviours.</p>	<p>Some agreement but complex issue</p> <p>Some agreement</p>	<p>For instance, environmental stewardship practised but not preached (as observed in fieldwork). Yet the quadrilateral and further complicating issues impinge upon agency. Inherent concern perhaps trumped or mitigated by theological engagement. Churches self-reinforcing organisms. Occasional differences between espoused and operant theology; attitudes more crystallised by quadrilateral. Behaviours can express more positively as pockets of engagement freer from doctrinal influence.</p>
<p>Lowry, 1998, pp.230,233</p> <p>Shaiko, 1987, p.250</p>	<p>Less demand for membership of environmental groups among Christian, most strongly evident with conservative Christians.</p>	<p>Agreement</p>	<p>Rich data provided in Table 9 to illustrate the multiple ways that traditional environmentalism and Christian beliefs do not marry. Lessens concern and leads to fear of engagement. Value or world-view conflict clearly evident.</p>

<p>Truelove and Joireman, 2009, pp.814-815</p>	<p>Biblical literalists favour personal economic wellbeing rather than general ecological wellbeing.</p> <p>Creation here for human use.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Agree</p>	<p>Employment and a good economy prioritised above ecological concern. Again anthropocentric drive (19 interviews, 51%) and failure to see close link between environmental and human wellbeing.</p> <p>See God creating to provide human needs. Seen strongly through anthropocentric eyes (19 interviews, 51%). Stewardship not seen as end in itself, but to glorify God or aid evangelism. No inherent value of itself. Interviews never expressed bio-centric or eco-centric values.</p>
<p>Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple, 2000, pp.588-589</p>	<p>Biblical literalists resist ecological consciousness most strongly.</p> <p>Anthropocentrism can still promote sound environmental responsibility, as people need a healthy environment for human needs.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Agree but for different reasons</p>	<p>Table 9 shows several reasons why environmentalism is resisted. Desire to maintain biblical status quo, elevating ecology too highly seen as alternative world-view, pantheistic or pagan, prioritising things in an unbiblical order.</p> <p>Anthropocentrism (19 interviews, 51%) closely linked to dominion notions (17/19 or 90%) that are explained in terms of a caring stewardship or management of the earth. Connection between healthy environment and human flourishing rarely made. Though after incorporating other doctrines (quadrilateral), this potential rarely fleshes out fully.</p>
<p>Biel and Nilsson, 2005, p.189</p>	<p>Certain environmental issues trigger specific theological responses 'religious values'; resulting in being against or in favour. Such as strong resistance by Christians to GM crops, seeing as interfering in God's design.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>All seven interviews (100%) mentioning GM crops were against for theological reasons. Whereas for renewable energy, from 14 interviews (38% of total), only 3/14 (21%) had any theological reasoning. Normative theological reasoning tied to most issues, though also often in multiple and at times conflicting ways (climate change, species</p>

			extinctions). Also different people respond in different ways on some issues, drawing upon their own theological engagement, due to lack of corporate leadership.
Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel, 2011, pp.279,281,284-5	Christians leading more frugal lifestyles.	Agree	Strong evidence for this within my study as 16 interviewees spoke strongly against materialism (43%) and none in favour. Related to multiple biblical themes in relation to stewarding resources wisely and being wary of materialism.
	Importance of church context, for instance Anglican churches having Fair Trade stalls.	Agree that it is important	More than one year of fieldwork evidenced that nothing like this going on in conservative evangelical churches. Environmental stewardship blocked or at least not taken up in church context and this hampers engagement.
Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel, 2010, p143	Religion favours conformity, tradition, maintaining conservatism.	Strongly Agree	Especially true with conservative evangelicalism where this rigidity and maintenance of status quo most strongly adhered to, as all interviews (100%) would in some way adhere to, with none expressing the opposite.
Klineberg, Mckeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.749,751	Christians more engaged with local rather than global issues.	Agree	Reason to disengage with climate change (15 interviews, 41%) but be concerned with something like litter in local area (nine interviews, 24%). Though living in a more affluent country, environmental problems less evident, leading to less engagement, whereas the opposite for those with experience in developing countries (four interviews, 11%).

<p>Dunlap and Van Liere, 1984, p.1023</p>	<p>Commitment to DSP leads to less environmental concern</p>	<p>Complex issue</p>	<p>Commitment to DSP informed by normative theology, resisting NEP. However, theological engagement leads to less materialistic lifestyles (16 interviews, 43%) and high levels of concern with certain issues (deforestation with eleven interviews, water pollution with five interviews, and air pollution with eight interviews, animal cruelty seven interviews and factory farming eight interviews). Yet theology informs scepticism on other issue such as climate change 53%.</p>
<p>Greeley, 1993, p.22</p>	<p>Stern image of God leads to less environmental concern (master, judge).</p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>No connection made. More so linked to God being sovereign (16 interviews, 43% mentioning with no interviews expressing God was not sovereign) rather than being master or judge.</p>
<p>Tarakeshwar <i>et al.</i> 2001, p.398-401</p>	<p>Nature sacred, created by God, so deserves care.</p>	<p>Some evidence to support; some to contradict, as this view runs against other theological inputs.</p>	<p>Belief in God making a creation He saw as good (Chapter 5) which He cares for. Deserving of care expressed in relation to stewardship (17 interviews, 46%) but lacking with engagement with environmental issues (climate change 53% of 29 interviews and species extinctions 30% of 27 interviews).</p>
<p>Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.744  Kanagy and Nelsen, 1995, pp.37-39</p>	<p>Against Government intervention/legislation or spending to support environment.</p>	<p>Disagree.</p>	<p>Support for government legislation (proposed by 11 of 13 interviewees, 85%) and submission to it evidenced on numerous issues especially recycling (28 of 29 interviews, 97%). Though of importance is that this is in relation to existing legislation.</p>

<p>Hand and Van Liere, 1984, p.564</p>	<p>Christians hold strongly mastery over nature concepts, non-Christians hold harmony with nature views</p>	<p>Disagree.</p>	<p>Although being seen as above nature, this is not all about mastery over nature. Dominion is not translated to domination but rather a caring stewardship (17 of 19 interviews, 90%). Evangelicals (10 interviews, 27%) see themselves as more caring than unbelievers who are trapped more in sinful lifestyles that destroy the environment; like greed and materialism.</p>
<p>Djupe and Hunt, 2009, pp.680-681</p>	<p>Clergy communicating in favour of environmental stewardship, led to congregants engaging positively with environmental stewardship.</p> <p>Important for leadership to incorporate scriptural reflection and prayer when decision making about environmental engagement.</p>	<p>Not evident</p> <p>Potential truth</p>	<p>Ministers avoiding the topic (no pastoral teaching evidenced in one year of fieldwork and 16 interviewees (43%) reiterating they did not see a place for environmental stewardship as a corporate issue). No leadership can result in less engagement. Preaching strictly expository, not topical. Environmental care not a predominant normative theological theme in the Bible therefore does not figure in preaching.</p> <p>Also would require similar leadership and Christian approach, but not yet happened within mainstream conservative evangelicalism.</p>
<p>Guth <i>et al.</i> 1993, p.379 and 1995, p.371</p>	<p>Christian eschatology, a belief in an imminent End Times results in environmental apathy.</p>	<p>Partly agree but partly disagree.</p> <p>More complexity than previously thought.</p>	<p>Not as powerful a drive as previously thought for most conservative evangelicals with 10 interviewees (27%) mentioning eschatology should not affect environmental concern, seven (19%) mentioning intergenerational justice, though it seems to be the case for a minority (resulting in</p>

			fatalistic attitudes for 5 interviewees, 14%). The very idea of not caring about creation for eschatological reasons resented by many. End Times could still be thousands of years away. God's sovereignty and understanding of the evangelical Gospel has more influence than eschatology.
Shaiko, 1987, p.250	Members of environmental groups far less likely to be Christian than non-members.	Requires further clarification.	Table 10 shows how conservative evangelicals distance themselves from some groups like Greenpeace, but on the other hand would be happy to support or join what they deem less extreme groups such as the RSPB. A total of 11 interviewees (30%) noted prior or present membership of such less extreme groups.
Kanagy and Willits, 1993, p.682	Environmental concern can be expressed in areas other than the NEP	Agree	Appreciation of creation strongly linked to conversion and other normative theology (Chapter 5). Also anthropocentric stewardship (17/19 interviews) can result in deep care for environment, evidenced with certain issues.

From Table 19 it can be seen that in comparing my own work with that of previous quantitative empirical studies, with some 29 different themes, the majority of points raised (20) can be confirmed with my own empirical evidence. However, my own work helps understand each of these themes with greater detail. On a total of seven issues, my work was in either partial or total disagreement. Here, the nature of my in-depth study has been able to offer new insights with evidence to further understanding, although I acknowledge that this is often comparing Christian groups with very different backgrounds.

The literature review provides several reasons for conservative evangelicals scoring lower than other groups in their environmental attitudes and behaviours. These include believing in

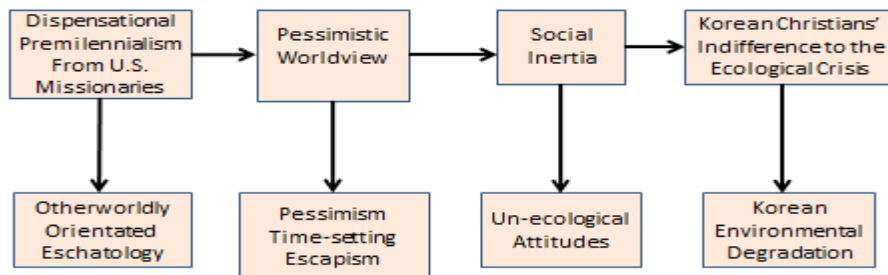
human supremacy over nature, eschatological interpretations, secular versus Christian culture wars, and the science and religion debate. However, these reasons are only briefly stated and can be taken to far greater depths of analysis when using data from my own project. The first reason given, that human mastery over nature is interpreted as a domination of nature, in line with the arguments of the White thesis, is not backed up as a solid reason for less care in the present study. The background to the whole debate about Christian influences upon environmental attitudes goes back in many ways to the interest in the topic generated by Lynn White's (1967) thesis and it is therefore interesting to address White's reasoning in light of present findings. The idea of dominion being so anthropocentric that a human-nature dichotomy emerged with creation's purpose being to serve human needs was presented by White. The literature review showed how in numerous studies Christian 'dominion' was understood in terms of a 'harsh' domination of nature for human benefit, in line with the Genesis injunction to 'subdue the earth' and the White thesis. Results for my own project disproved this reasoning, in that the vast majority of evangelicals explained dominion in terms of a caring stewardship, with 17 of 19 interviews (46% of total sample and 90% of those coded discussing anthropocentrism) describing anthropocentrism in this way and only two interviews (5% of total and 11% of those coded discussing anthropocentrism) being coded for dominion being defined more as human domination. However, this is in conjunction with still seeing humans as above the rest of creation, but this being linked to dominion and resulting in a responsibility to manage the environment rather than abuse it. In this sense, the Genesis injunction to have dominion is interpreted by White and those earlier studies testing his theory in the literature review with a lack of understanding of how the same text can lead to a more sensitive stewardship. Yet perhaps more closely marrying with mastery over nature concepts is the idea that the main reason broader creation exists is to serve human needs and therefore it is not valued independently in its own right, or is not seen to have intrinsic value. No interviewees put forward the view that creation had intrinsic value and that this was a reason it should be cared for. In this way, the literature review's charge that human supremacy over nature results in less caring attitudes toward the environment is partially backed up in that non-human creation's value is limited, but the overarching theme is that it is to be still cared for by such humans that have supremacy. The counter belief and possible reason identified in this research is that human sin or failure to acknowledge God and become regenerated and sanctified is one of the main things that result in environmental degradation, as articulated in 17 interviews (46%), as people go their own way with things such as following greedy and materialistic desires, which could be interpreted as mastery over nature orientations for those who are not Christian rather than those who are; the cause therefore being linked to a failure to incorporate biblical texts. Furthermore, my own findings have shown how less environmental concern is more



commonly caused by a highly evangelistic and narrow interpretation of the Christian gospel (as evidenced in 14 interviews (38%) and the focal point of the evangelical gospel taught in 59 sermons or 46% of total from fieldwork), and beliefs about God's sovereignty (as evidenced in 16 interviews (43%) and being taught in 28 sermons or 22% of total from fieldwork), rather than the dominion argued by White. So even if the Christian faith practised by conservative evangelicals in my target group does result in less environmental care, this is for different theological reasons than White (1967) put forward, in addition to having more multifaceted and complex causes than previous empirical studies would have us believe.

A further reason given by studies in the literature review is that conservative evangelicals' belief in a definite eschatology or imminent end to the current earth, leads them to be insensitive to the plight of a temporary environment (Guth *et al.* 1993, 1995; Wolkomir *et al.* 1997b; Dekker, Ester and Nas, 1997). In his 'Eschatology and Ecology: Experiences of the Korean Church' (2010) Paul Hang Sik Cho provides a detailed investigation of one country's experiences though it is not primarily an empirical study. He makes the following arguments (which are also illustrated in Figure 20).

FIGURE 20: ESCHATOLOGY AND ECOLOGY, EXPERIENCES OF THE KOREAN CHURCH



Adapted from Cho: 2010, p 228-230.

In the model, we see that dispensational premillennialism is an otherworldly oriented eschatology: a focus upon the End Times and the new heaven and earth. It is argued this leads to a pessimistic world-view, with adherents engaging in time-setting (the predicting of an imminent End Times), leading to escapism. This then leads to social inertia or a lack of concern with this world, including environmental issues. Korean evangelicals then seem indifferent to environmental degradation in their country which has resulted in an environmental crisis. However, although this potential is possible, the explanation by Cho is incomplete and overly simplistic, explaining the theologically worst case scenario. My own data can explain the eschatology/environment relationship in greater detail: specifically how different eschatological themes are evident and how other Christian doctrines can have a moderating effect upon eschatology and even how eschatology can be interpreted in an alternative, environmentally sensitive way. In addition, eschatology is not a prime focal point of preaching observed during this fieldwork, with only nine sermons (7% of total) being coded in this way.

With my own data, a small number of interviews (five, 14%) clearly demonstrated how their eschatological interpretation led to a lack of environmental concern. However, it is also common for evangelicals to stress the fact that nobody knows when the End Times will come (five interviews, 14%), and therefore life has to be lived responsibly with regards to stewardship of the earth. Ten interviewees (27%) put forward the view that eschatological beliefs should not affect concern for the environment, and seven interviews (19%) mentioned the importance of intergenerational justice. In this sense eschatological beliefs can be mediated or held in check by the theological train of thought of Christian dominion or stewardship, which was noted as a reason evangelical Christians should

care for the environment, as defined by 17 interviewees (46%). On an even more positive note, a literal belief in the End Times can be interpreted in a totally different way that results in a far higher level of environmental concern, different elements of which were mentioned in seven interviews (19%). Here the argument is that Christians are given dominion over the natural world by God until the End Times. It is therefore His property, and we only hold it as custodians. The belief then is that Jesus will return, and one way of expressing our love for Him is in caring for creation. The fact that degradation is often caused by human sin (17 interviews, 46%) further points to necessary human remedial action. This research therefore concludes that belief in Christian eschatology is not as strong a precursor of poor environmental attitudes as has been previously thought and that although Cho's model is true for some, it does not provide a comprehensive picture. I have shown how it is necessary to incorporate the different theological trains of thought, as evidenced in Chapter 6, as a more complex matrix of drives. In effect, eschatology is only one ingredient in the mix and in any case not the strongest drive of negative environmental attitudes and behaviours.

A further reason given by studies in the literature review for conservative evangelicals scoring lowest with environmental concern is that such attitudes are the direct manifestation of Christian versus secular culture wars. This can be seen in evangelical perceptions that society has gone its own way, indifferent to what the Bible teaches on numerous issues such as abortion, teaching of evolution, and attitudes towards homosexuality, which are resisted by evangelicals who attempt to maintain what they see as a biblical position. This has been evident in the literature review and helps explain to some extent their findings as evangelicals resist movement towards the NEP, and environmental concern can be seen as a liberal and secular issue. My own research has shown how a real fear exists for evangelicals in relation to the environmental movement, with 16 interviews (43%), which results in some evangelicals counter positioning themselves in relation to environmental issues, or a refusal to engage with the environment based upon what environmentalists say are the reasons why they should do so, and particularly a reluctance to allow environmental stewardship to be addressed in church contexts, as also evidenced in 16 interviews (43%). The environmental movement can be seen as a powerful organisation, or even a pantheistic new religion (five interviews, 14%) that prioritises things differently to the Bible being a distraction for evangelicals (eight interviews, 22%), seeing humans as a problem that need eradicating (four interviews, 11%). In this way another 'short circuit' type of reasoning exists as biblical mandates are side-lined by biases that are more powerfully evident. However, with others taking part in this study biblical stewardship is rooted more strongly and the culture war described in the literature review is not a powerful determinant of their environmental attitudes. Here 11 respondents (30%) showed previous or present support for stewardship organisations that are seen to have a more sensible and

realistic approach to environmental protection, whilst rejecting those that are seen as extremist. In like manner, goals that are seen as acceptable and good are supported whilst others that are deemed inappropriate for evangelicals are ignored, or the larger world-views that non-Christian environmental organisations draw upon. In these ways, the biblical dominion mandate can still be incorporated into positive engagement with the environment, despite a larger culture war or clash of values that may be evident. With the importance of world-views affecting Christian attitudes toward engaging or retreating from certain issues, it is not surprising that science has also been mentioned as a determinant of Christian attitudes toward the environment.

The studies of Sherkat and Ellison (2007), Harper (2008), and Stanford and Brewer (2011) point to the possibility of a conflict between science and religion, epitomised by such things as the creationism/evolution debate, leading to Christian biases with environmental attitudes, with the environmental movement often using scientific research to back up arguments. This it is believed can most evidently be seen in relation to climate change where scientific research takes a prominent place in arguments. My own project concludes again that this reasoning is far too simplistic, by suggesting a belief in creationism leads to evangelicals having an ignorant attitude to science *per se*. However, whereas broader society may accept science as a gold standard to be accepted without much thought, conservative evangelicals express caution in many areas of academic pursuit, from philosophy to science and even theology and religious studies, when conducted in more liberal institutions. This is in relation to them seeing the world go its own way rather than God's way. Rather than evangelicals having a blanket rejection of science it is rather that the Bible still has authority when processing scientific data and arguments (18 interviews, 49%) with only three further interviewees (8%) allowing science to affect their views upon biblical creationism. This study has shown how conservative evangelical attitudes toward climate change are complex, with both belief and scepticism, expressed for numerous theological reasons, which are not only the result of an unwillingness to accept scientific consensus because it is science, although science formed part of their reasoning for 12 interviewees (41% of the 29 discussing the issue). Other issues such as God's sovereignty over the present and future (13 interviews, 45% of the 29 ), and a refusal to allow another single issue to rise too highly in the face of the continual need to evangelise, are seen as other strong precursors of scepticism to climate change. Just as with eschatology previously, and science here, the seemingly obvious reasoning that these things must deeply affect the environmental concern of evangelicals, often given by commentators who are not evangelical Christians, falls far short when put under the scrutiny of more detailed investigation.

One of the main areas to emerge in contextualising my own work is how it shows the complexity of what is going on and the reasons for this. The empirical studies in the literature review would just understand this as 'biblical literalists' tend to have lower levels of environmental concern. However, again, my own work has offered a greater level of understanding. As the data showed in Chapters 6-7, positions of interviewees that I identified as emanating from theological engagement with the Bible, often created tension or vied with one another leading to a situation that is far more complex than previously thought. Previous quantitative studies have commonly claimed only one theological input was responsible for less concern, whereas I would argue this oversimplification does not match what actually happens. This could be a result of qualitative studies enabling a depth of understanding in comparison to quantitative studies. No interviews were coded as having only one reason for less concern. Unravelling the complexity of the reality in how environmental attitudes are formed is therefore *key* to the conclusions I have reached with my investigation. In ethnographic terminology this could be seen as 'making the familiar strange', that when previously taken for granted assumptions are scrutinised with the aid of qualitative research methods, they can be judged as far too simplistic and that there is an underlying complexity that was previously unknown. The importance then is to unravel this complexity so that it can be more readily understood. One way of understanding how this complexity is processed would be by taking an example from electronics. Stereo systems often have, or used to have, a 'graphic equaliser' or several switches, each of which can be adjusted to result in large or subtle differences in the sound which is produced by the stereo, with possibly thousands of variations or combinations available, as each switch can be set at, for example, -10 to +10. Using this as an analogy for how conservative evangelicals incorporate various normative doctrines and theologially interpret the Bible and church history and practice, in addition to other influences such as interviewees own personal life experiences and finances, then my analogy can show how they can major in some and minor in others, or be more interested in some than others. These 'switches' are then processed in various positions, resulting in a certain stance in relation to environmental attitudes and behaviours, in many ways unique to each individual, which then resonates in their life and opinions they express as both espoused and operant theology. This has been exemplified in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 and could lead to what could be termed as various 'typologies' in responses from my target group to environmental themes. For instance, taking the analogy of the graphic equaliser and explaining it in more detail, an interviewee who had the switch for 'evangelism' set at +10, evidencing a typology of strong evangelicalism, whilst that for 'stewardship' was still in a minus position, would be characterised with attitudes that were so strongly emphasising the need to 'save' the lost that issues of environmental stewardship would barely figure in their attitudes and behaviours. Similarly,

another interviewee whose switch for 'eschatology' was set at maximum, evidencing a strong eschatological typology, whilst again that for 'stewardship' was little used, could end up with similar disengaging attitudes toward the environment. However, another whose 'stewardship' switch was placed at a high positive number and whose 'eschatology' and 'evangelism' switches were on zero or in minus, could have engaging and positive environmental attitudes. The fact that each of these switches can be slid to positions of subtle differences, as well as larger ones, results in a multitude of possible variations. Now that engagement with studies from the 'first four waves' of empirical work addressing the Christianity and environment relationship has been completed, I will now contextualise my results with previous studies using qualitative techniques or those in the 'fifth wave'.

### 8:3 DIALOGUE WITH PREVIOUS QUALITATIVE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

---

As I stated in the literature review in Chapter 2, previous quantitative empirical work addressing the relationship between Christianity and environmental concern has occurred in 'four waves'; three of which were identified by Woodrum and Wolkomir (1997) and a fourth wave, focusing more upon specific issues, was identified by myself. Now studies addressing the Christianity and environment relationship have entered a 'fifth wave'; namely those that employ qualitative and not quantitative techniques, again a theme identified by myself whilst conducting this research. I would argue that the quantitative studies, in often repeatedly using older data sets from general social surveys, told us all they could do about the relationship between Christianity and the environment at that time, in many ways having a level of superficiality, such as engaging in guess work when it comes to presenting reasons or causes for correlations identified, and therefore new techniques were needed to further understanding.<sup>86</sup> This 'fifth wave' has included studies by Haluza-Delay (2008), Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs (2009), Wilkinson (2010a and b, 2012), and DeLashmutt (2011). However, all but the last are still based upon the U.S. with only DeLashmutt focusing upon the U.K (on Anglicanism). My own study of conservative evangelicals in Wales forms an important part of the 'fifth wave'. Taking again the analogy of the 'scientific black box', whereby inputs and outputs are easily observable, but what happens in the area in between is hidden, the importance of my own work can be explained in opening this black box to see the internal workings and mechanisms, as was achieved in Chapters 5-7. Quantitative studies in many ways bounced suspicions and theories

---

<sup>86</sup> This criticism is not aimed at quantitative work more broadly and does not discount the value of further quantitative studies being able to offer more understanding of the Christianity and environment relationship in the future. Further research could even test themes evident within of my own work via surveys.

off this black box without really understanding what lay inside. In addition, non-empirical work largely theorised about the topic, or imagined what might lie inside the 'black box', without having any hard evidence. Yet the previous few years have witnessed those few qualitative studies that attempt to see more specifically the inner workings of this black box in some way.

In comparing previous qualitative studies with my own results, it can be seen again how my own research has furthered understanding and knowledge in several ways. Tables 1 and 2 presented in Chapter 2 have shown how Haluza-Delay (2008) observed both the obstacles and opportunities for faith-based engagement with environmental concern. Focusing upon R.C. and Lutheran groups it is interesting how most of the obstacles identified by him (Table 1) are also evident in my own study, pointing to how theological engagement can affect environmental concern in traditions other than conservative evangelicalism. This is perhaps surprising when thinking of the theological differences between the groups observed by Haluza-Delay and myself, and also the differing hermeneutical lens used by these groups when focusing upon the Bible.

In particular, those he identified that would resonate within my own data include: the fear of being seen as being involved with New Age beliefs, paganism or pantheism, as expressed by five interviewees (14%) and that environmental groups can appear hostile to Christianity, with 16 interviews, 43% noting how environmentalism can be extremist. My own data showed how interviewees identified environmentalism as having a different world-view, which leads to the exercising of both caution and discernment in relation to certain beliefs they propound, particularly attitudes toward humans being a problem rather than a solution, with a variety of more precise hesitations outlined in Table 10. Also identified by Haluza-Delay were the difficulties of seemingly conflicting biblical interpretations. My own data again would agree with this, and I have shown far more deeply (Chapters 6-7) how this is evident as conservative evangelicals negotiate normative theological strands that can lead to both harmony and discord when feeding espoused and operant theology. This was especially seen in the environmental quadrilateral of doctrines that influence environmental attitudes and behaviours. I also showed how normative theology can be interpreted differently by people in the same group, leading to opposite espoused and operant theology in relation to specific environmental issues. Haluza-Delay also points to an 'over concern for the afterlife' as an obstacle and my own research has shown how this can result in a 'heaven-centric' way of living which can result in an aloofness to social concerns which are trumped by a spiritual evangelism, as evidenced in 14 interviews (38%) and preaching the 'gospel' in 59 sermons (46% of total). In this sense environmental concern can be seen as a 'threat to the gospel' which can be defined in purely spiritual terms (eight interviews, 22%). Eschatology, a world that will pass away,

was seen as a strong obstacle by Haluza-Delay, and this resonated with my own research in a small number of interviews (five, 14%). I also showed how differing interpretation as to when the end times will be (five interviews, 14%) and uncertainty as to what exactly will happen (destruction or renewal), resulted in this doctrine not being as strong an obstacle as others, with ten interviews (27%) acknowledging eschatology should not negatively affect environmental attitudes. Haluza-Delay also noted the trumping effect of human concerns in that this acted as a block to caring for non-human concerns as only humans are made in God's image. Again my own research partly backed this up with evidencing strongly entrenched anthropocentrism in 19 interviews (51%), and 11 interviewees (30%) expressing a hierarchy with human concerns at the top. However, my own data also showed an alternative in that the exercising of dominion can be linked to anthropocentrism and therefore result in positive engagement with environmental concern, in as much as those made in the image of God, have a God given directive to exercise wise dominion (17 interviews 46%), more clearly reflected after conversion (Chapter 6). Haluza-Delay also noted how personal responses, conviction and lifestyle changes, can be lacking. My own research has shown how this was also evident in Chapter 7 and can be drawn back to doctrinal interpretations in Chapter 6, a fear of broader environmentalism and a lack of effective teaching and knowledge on the subject. Haluza-Delay noted this in terms of a lack of faith-based societal criticism to address ecological imbalance, and I evidenced in detail how the specific focus or 'burdens' of conservative evangelicals criticism of society, are on other issues and not the environment (Figure 19). However, what could be termed 'faith-based societal criticism' did surface in attitudes toward materialism (16 interviews, 43%), in sin such as greed (17 interviews, 46%) and how conversion resulted in changed attitudes toward creation (19 interviews, 51%) (Chapter 5). A reluctance to make 'green' changes in lifestyle was also evident in my own research in that again this would bring up fears of being brought into an alternative agenda (eight interviews, 22%). The suggestion that there was little corporate action because faith was largely a personal and individualistic activity was not evidenced as the main reason for a lack of corporate engagement in my own work. Here theological interpretations and the strong influence of normative theology were more paramount as seen in Chapter 6.

It should also be noted that although the themes identified as obstacles, many can also be adapted to become an opportunity such as a higher education or awareness. Furthermore, my work identified extra obstacles not seen by Haluza-Delay, and I can further understanding by detailing these. One area is in how creation is seen to be in a fallen state (as expressed by 11 interviewees, 30%) and needs eschatological renewal (as expressed in 16 interviews, 43%). Creation can be seen through a lens of corruption rather than beauty and that only God can put this right at the End Times. A further obstacle uncovered during my own fieldwork, not apparent in Haluza-Delay's



different denominational groups, was the lack of involvement with environmental stewardship at the corporate church level, including teaching on the issue. On the whole stewardship is interpreted as not being an important enough issue to warrant corporate engagement (as evidenced during fieldwork and specifically attendance at 128 sermons given by 20 different ministers, none of which had creation care themes). Corporate church life, in not promoting concern, limits not just corporate but also individual engagement with the environment. Members, in receiving no teaching or leadership on the issue are in some ways ethically and theologically set adrift, and this can lead to uncertainty and a struggle to find what they would see as an authentic voice, or a defined moral compass in relation to the stewardship of creation. Because creation stewardship is not being seen as an important enough Christian issue to warrant corporate engagement, people are left with doubts as to how deeply they should become involved personally.

One perhaps might think that if the obstacles Haluza-Delay identified were so evident in my own project that the opportunities he saw (Table 2) may also be. However, this is not the case as most of the opportunities are highly problematic for conservative evangelicals, though a small number are evident. In fact, what are deemed to be opportunities for Haluza-Delay are more apparently obstacles for conservative evangelicals. In particular this includes church teaching and activities that foster learning on the subject and official church statements about environmental concern, however as my ethnography uncovered, teaching on the topic does not exist and neither do declarations that address the topic or historical sources they could draw upon (as relating to normative theology). Haluza-Delay also notes how engagement with moral issues and accountability for church members can be opportunities, but for my sample it is other moral issues or burdens they engage with (Figure 19), and accountability in relation to stewardship of the environment is something that has not developed in a real, practical way. Of things Haluza-Delay mentions that are also evident in my own group as opportunities for increased concern are: personal responsible actions or operant theology, in relation to things such as recycling (27 interviews, 73%), and that motivation can come from faith sources, such as interpretations of dominion (17 interviews, 46%) and obeying environmental legislation (11 interviews, 30%). However, this has to be juxtaposed with other faith based demotivating factors as seen in doctrinal interpretations in Chapter 6. Haluza-Delay also sees a sense of duty, obligations, notions of righteousness/the moral foundations of churches, as drives for increased environmental protection. However, in comparison to my own data, these things could be explained in more 'non-environmental' ways, such as a 'duty' to fulfil the Great Commission, more deeply expressed in 14 interviews (38%) though I doubt if any would disagree, and taught in 59/128 sermons. Also to lead a holy life, and again with righteousness and moral foundations it would be in relation to other issues, and although stewardship is theoretically

accepted (17 interviews, 46%) engagement with specific issues is controversial as seen in Chapter 7, Figures 16-18 and Tables 14-17. Haluza-Delay also shows how issues that are given church attention gain more sustained action, and although this is true in a conservative evangelical context with broader themes, in such a context the environment does not gain any church attention. Haluza-Delay also notes how engagement between Christian and wider discourses (what we might call an aspect of formal theology) can lead to opportunities, but for my own target group, generally there is a disengagement with other knowledge disciplines. Similarly, the same forces are at work with what Haluza-Delay describes as an opportunity in that Christian church traditions converse with present cultural motifs. Yet for conservative evangelicals, discernment is used which leads to a resistance to be drawn into issues broader society raise the importance of, specific examples being climate change discourse or acceptance of the need for paradigmatic shifts such as to the NEP (with any notions of equality between human and non-human life forms being strongly resisted). This was seen with 19 interviewees (51%) expressing entrenched anthropocentric positions but none expressing alternative ways to value humans within creation. Haluza-Delay also notes how Christian hope can be seen as another opportunity as well as faith driven community service. However for conservative evangelicals, such hope centres around the need to be saved whereas environmentalism can instigate fear. Haluza-Delay's final opportunity is that Christians can act counter-culturally when confronting materialism, and this was strongly evident in my own results with 16 interviewees (43%) speaking against materialism. For conservative evangelicals there is often a desire for more frugal living and caution not be lured into consumerism.

Generally opportunities for faith-based environmental stewardship are significantly different when purely based upon my own results, and again in noting these I am furthering understanding in the field. This observation points to how conservative evangelicals have their own unique identifying factors, though it may be that the more in-depth nature of my study allowed extra things to surface that did not in the teaching style ethnography of Haluza-Delay. These extra themes in summary focus upon the following: adherence to environmental legislation (11 interviews, 30%); being against animal cruelty (15 interviews, 41%); being against human interference in nature (11 interviews, 30%), acknowledging the wonder and beauty of creation (29 interviews, 78%); personal experience of creation such as with hobbies (23 interviews 62%, and enjoying creation 19 interviews 51%); preferences for rural or more aesthetically pleasing creation (17 interviews, 46%); dominion defined as caring stewardship (17 interviews, 46% of total interviews but 90% of those mentioning dominion); personal experience of environmental degradation (eight interviews, 21%) and fasting mentioned by four interviewees (11%) though no doubt practised by more.

In addition, such differences as Haluza-Delay noting more engagement with the environment from younger people, was not so evident in my own data. His conclusion that change must be made slowly and sensitively to be taken seriously by the religious groups he studied is something that would definitely be the case with the target group of my study, whereby conservatism and resistance to change are part of the religious landscape. In many ways my own study answers his call for more research into other groups and the discussion above has provided an insightful comparison. Although blocks to engagement with environmental stewardship have a high level of similarities within conservative evangelical and Lutheran and Catholic backgrounds, opportunities do not overlap in the same way. The growth of environmental stewardship notions within conservative evangelical groups is therefore more problematic than in other denominations.

Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs' (2009) study of attitudes toward climate change provides another potential comparison with my own work. Through analysis of texts they develop three models of how Christian groups have responded to the issue: 'conservational stewardship', 'developmental stewardship' and 'developmental preservation' as was seen in Chapter 2, Tables 3-5. In comparing these to my own results about climate change as seen in Chapter 7:5, it can be concluded that conservational stewardship and developmental preservation are not predominantly apparent in my sample, as both strongly support policy to tackle climate change. However, some interviewees who took part in my project and believed climate change was a real occurrence caused by humans (14/29 interviews, 48%), showed some similarities with a small number of issues mentioned in both 'conservational stewardship' and 'developmental preservation'. However, to stress once again, the number who expressed attitudes that a strong international and governmental response is needed to address climate change, would be very few (3/29 interviews, 10%). Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs' (2009) 'developmental stewardship' typology was apparent in my own results: that creation can be used for human benefit or is largely seen as storehouse to satisfy human needs (a belief that no interviewees contradicted) and that technology and development are to be used in this. In addition, being opponents of strict climate policy, having a deep scepticism of anthropogenic climate change (40% of 29 interviews, or uncertainty 13% of 29 interviews), and a belief that potential climatic changes are natural fluctuations with distant effects. My own research has clarified how this is closely linked to notions of God's sovereignty (13 interviews, 35%) and His control over such things as the weather and sea levels and in addition that God created a robust world that is not fragile. As such humans are not seen as a threat. Furthermore, climate change initiatives are seen as a waste of finances and effort, and perhaps just a way of exercising control over the population. Population growth is seen as a blessing and part of God's plan, not a problem that is causing too much emissions. My own data adds to this by

identifying how the perceived extremist (16 interviews, 43%) and anti-human sentiments (four interviews, 11%) of the environmental lobby are seen as dangerous for evangelicals. Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs' (2009) typology also noted that God's promise never to destroy the earth until His own timing, clearly linked to God's eschatological sovereignty and not human control, was evident (16 interviews, 43%). Although based upon text documents from the U.S. it is interesting that quite a strong match was made between my own results for scepticism toward climate change and Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs' (2009) typology of developmental stewardship and their findings have been evidenced in other qualitative work.

Wilkinson (2010a and b, 2012) also focused upon climate change attitudes amongst samples of evangelicals in the U.S. Wilkinson concluded that this single issue has created a polarising battleground within evangelicalism in the U.S., with conservative evangelicals having a hardened response to climate change whilst members of the NAE, predominantly being less conservative, engage. The argument is that this one issue negatively affects broader creation care, as climate change splits evangelicals; with some engaging and others denying human causes which can lead them to move further from creation care sympathies more generally. It is also true from my own research that responses to climate change by conservative evangelicals can be highly sceptical, as clearly detailed in Figure 17 and Table 17. Wilkinson also finds that conservative evangelicals in the U.S. fit more into Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs' (2009) 'developmental stewardship' category as also seen with many conservative evangelicals in the U.K., in my own research. It is possible to reason that if the most mainstream environmental issues of the day were seen by evangelicals as worthy of engagement, this could result in broader sympathies to engage with creation care more generally. Likewise, if the main issues do not theologically resound in drawing upon normative theology in positive ways with evangelicals, but rather strands of normative theology develop distrust and resistance, then broader creation care engagement could suffer. Results of interviewee attitudes toward climate change showed a fissure between belief and scepticism largely along theological lines of reasoning (Tables 16-17), whereas harmony exist more on other issues that trigger harmonious theological responses such as with GM crops, deforestation, water and air pollution. However, it is difficult to decipher whether attitudes toward climate change lead to negative responses to other issues for respondents taking part in my own project, as argued by Wilkinson. At one level it may result in less desire to make creation care a corporate level issue, and increase fear of the environmental movement using this one issue as a catalyst for the formation of a new environmentally friendly consciousness. However, when looking at other environmental problems, they also have their own clear links to normative theology, independent of climate change, and the whole issue has so many different possible influences, with the eight

different areas discussed in Chapter 6, that I believe responses to things like species extinctions and renewable energy would be largely the same independent of climate change. But I would agree with Wilkinson in as much as the centrality of climate change in environmental discourses at present does not help in generating creation care sympathies with conservative evangelicals, and it is therefore not the 'wise' way of engagement.

Wilkinson's view that climate change is a biospheric issue, that is hard to tangibly see in comparison to local issues, and that it is coupled to a radical rethinking of the way we should live on the earth, as well as becoming a dominant theme within environmentalism, in part accounts for resistance and scepticism. However, this does not lead to broader denial of stewardship responsibilities, as can be seen when conservative evangelicals define dominion and environmental stewardship positively (17 interviews, 46% of total and 90% of those discussing it), and engage with other environmental issues such as recycling (27 interviews, 73% of total and 93% of those discussing it), deforestation (11 interviews, 30% of total and 100% of those discussing it), air pollution (eight interviews, 22% of total and 100% of those discussing it) and factory farming (eight interviews, 22% of total and 100% of those discussing it) (Table 13). Perhaps for Wilkinson, results are affected by being rooted in the U.S. where the environment is a much more politicised issue, as seen in broader quantitative studies in the literature review.

Wilkinson also mentions that theological elements such as a harsh interpretation of dominion and eschatology, that figure so strongly in previous studies which claim they are the reasons for negative attitudes toward environmental concern from Christians, are not the central issues uncovered in her own findings. My own research would conclude that this is also the case with conservative evangelicals in my sample in the U.K. Rather it is issues of God's sovereignty (13/29 interviews, 45%) and the desire to evangelise (19/29 interviews, 66%) that run most strongly in fostering more negative attitudes toward the issue of climate change. Yet both God's sovereignty and evangelism are clearly scripturally bound, rooted in normative theology. So although my own research would agree with Wilkinson in helping to put into perspective (lowering the importance) of certain theological beliefs in relation to a lack of engagement with the environment (dominion and eschatology), she would conclude the real causes do not have theological roots, whereas I would argue they are just different theological elements and interrelationships of a more complex nature (Chapter 6-7). It is also interesting that the main reasons given for engagement with climate change observed by Wilkinson have theological motivations such as eschatological interpretations that focus more upon a renewal of the earth rather than its destruction; something which seems to be the accepted norm within broader Christian creation care organisations as biblical texts are seemingly

made more 'environmentally palatable'.<sup>87</sup> Yet my own research showed how respondents when talking about eschatology (27 interviews, 73%) expressed various positions such as 'restoration', 'renewal', 'destruction' or uncertainty. However, all would have believed in the eschatological reality of a 'new heaven and earth'.

The first qualitative study focusing upon environmental themes in a Christian group in the U.K. was completed by DeLashmutt (2011). In many ways DeLashmutt's work can be seen as the main precursor to my present study, and something which for me, acted as a positive catalyst and desire to conduct a more detailed qualitative project. Although focusing upon a different background and starting point—a denomination that had actively engaged with environmental issues at a leadership level—whereas the leadership of my target group had not, and more looking at the relationship between how such leadership on a specific issue such as climate change filters down to congregants, compared to the broader focus of my study, his results still provide an interesting comparison for my own work. His findings that denominational leadership had not resulted in more environmentally sensitive attitudes of congregants, who were even unaware of their churches' position on the issue, shows that lack of engagement is also an issue for more liberal churches, or those that represent a broader spectrum within Christianity, and even those with hierarchical leadership on the issue, not just more conservative churches where leadership on the topic is lacking (Chapter 6:9).

DeLashmutt (2011) identified three themes emerging from his research and the extent to which these are evident in my own work will now be analysed. One of these themes show for the first time how Christians do *positively* value creation, although this is only mentioned briefly, and in relation to creation inspiring awe and wonder. My own study has shown in far greater depth than previously documented, in Chapter 5:1-5:5, how conservative evangelicals do indeed provide a detailed and rich appreciation of creation when they initially talk about the environment in the interview encounter. This includes the beauty of creation (29 interviews, 78%); enjoyment of creation (19 interviews, 51%); complexity of creation (11 interviews, 30%); the power of God (17 interviews, 46%); creation as an arena for hobbies (23 interviews, 62%); reflection upon certain parts of creation (23 interviews, 62%) or specific geographical locations (21 interviews, 57%), and a thanks and praise for the Creator (16 interviews, 43%).

---

<sup>87</sup> Specifically in relation to eschatology see Bookless (2008, pp.74-77), Sorley (2009, pp.104-107) or for the trend more broadly, as the title suggests, see '*Greening Paul*' (Horrell, Hunt and Southgate, 2010).

However, DeLashmutt's second theme is that this first theme is linked to human use and abuse of creation which is seen as tantamount to sin, leading to calls for individual and corporate repentance and to be against practices that waste and destroy creation. Interestingly, although the theme of the destruction of creation or failure to adequately steward creation was seen as a sin in my own study, this was more expressed in terms of unbelieving society and the deleterious impact they have (17 interviews, 46%), something that the Christian gospel of repentance, conversion and regeneration could solve, rather than a problem emanating from conservative evangelicals themselves. It was not a strong identifiable theme that Christians themselves in my study thought they needed to respond to environmental degradation with a repentant heart, either corporately or individually (only 2 interviews, 5%) although some saw themselves as inevitably part of the 'human' system of production and consumption and being culpable in this way (five interviews, 14%). In addition, on a small number of occasions after prompting, some admitted that although environmental sin was not a distinguishable idea, it could be linked to the sin of greed or materialism, though as already stated, this was seen more in terms of those that were not Christians. Interviewees in my study also clearly articulated how they were against materialism within their lives (Chapter 7:2). It may be that this lack of repentance is coupled with not wanting to be seen as having to be linked with the environmentalist agenda, such as repentance being a precursor to changed attitudes that other groups in society are calling for or fear of raising environmental concern too highly on their hierarchical agenda. This is despite repentance for sin more generally, the need for asking for forgiveness, being prevalent in the lives of those taking part and figuring commonly in preaching (33 sermons, 26%) and worship through hymns. I have shown in Chapter 7 how conservative evangelicals commonly see their reasons for engaging and disengaging with environmental issues steeped in normative theology of the Bible. This therefore gives their espoused and operant theology a superior positioning, which can result in attitudes that seem determined to maintain things as they are. In this respect results differ from DeLashmutt's study, in that a lack of personal blame or responsibility was noted.

The third theme that DeLashmutt noticed was how congregants saw the need for increased teaching on the topic at church level combined with how engagement with environmental issues could be seen as aiding missionary work. In contrast my own findings revealed that congregants generally did not see environmental concern as part of the remit of the church (that engagement should be personal and not corporate (12 interviews, 32%), that it would be too much a challenge to orthodoxy (seven interviews, 19%) and therefore did not desire more church engagement such as teaching, identifying their own specific burdens of which creation stewardship was explicitly not (apart from one interview, 3%). However, some did make the connection with missions, in that

environmental protection was not something that deserved its own sole status, for its own sake, but if it could be used to minister the gospel to people, then it was something that more evangelical Christians thought was worth considering (five interviews, 14%). However, unlike with DeLashmutt in that this would be coupled with the churches' love for God and His creation, it was more coupled with evidence of a creator and therefore a need to believe in Jesus the Creator and Saviour.

Although the C of E has had one of the longest standing stances on pro-environmental engagement, DeLashmutt uncovered how this has been largely ineffective in filtering down to congregant level. Though he believes this is due to a lack of creative and engaging attempts to link church hierarchy with those on the pews, it could be that this more obvious interpretation may hide deeper theological influences that were uncovered in my own results, as presented in the evangelical environmental quadrilateral for instance amongst other complicating factors in Chapter 6, which could be missed by focusing upon understanding the relationship as one of lack of communication. Although I would also agree that more engaging and creative ways are needed to help Christians understand and resolve how their belief in environmental stewardship should flesh out in practical ways, I believe this is far more complex than having a hierarchy that presents relevant information to those lower down.

#### 8:4 CONCLUSION

---

In this chapter I have built upon the new synthesis of previous empirical work addressing the Christianity and environment relationship that I completed in Chapter 2, by comparing aspects of these results with my own work. Previous quantitative empirical work represented four waves, with a fifth wave identified as qualitative studies, of which this project is a part. This chapter has shown how my own research, when placed in direct dialogue with results from previous studies, offers interesting and valuable insights that help to understand the relationship between Christianity and the environment in greater detail. I will now bring these findings together in conclusion

Firstly, I have shown how conservative evangelicals do not follow the broader societal patterns of how certain demographic variables can predict environmental concern. Conservative evangelical attitudes and behaviours in relation to the environment are instead clearly aligned to their understanding of normative theology. However, I also identified what I have termed the 'lens of contextualisation' in that non-normative sources can affect the way normative theology is understood and applied. Foremost in these are personal biography and life experiences such as the



countries they have lived in and whether they were exposed to environmental degradation, their personal financial status, and previous church background.

Secondly, I have assessed each of the eight measures used to test environmental concern by previous empirical studies. The measures used led previous studies to conclude that conservative Christian groups have the poorest environmental attitudes and behaviours in comparison with other groups. However, I have shown how many of the previous empirical studies that put conservative evangelicals in the poorest light in relation to environmental concern, did so because they attempted to measure willingness to move from the DSP to the NEP, or to decentralise human superiority over non-human creation. Such an idea is resisted by conservative evangelicals due to their understanding of normative theology, as it would amount to overturning anthropocentrism, yet maintaining their position does not mean that they are less caring in relation to the environment as I have shown how anthropocentrism is linked to stewardship. I have also shown further bias in the measures used by previous studies such as supporting environmental organisations or political parties that have an unbiblical world-view, protecting the environment at the expense of human welfare, and being involved in environmental activism such as demonstrations.

When studied more deeply, I discovered the numerous ways in which conservative evangelicals do positively value creation, building much further depth to initial findings of DeLashmutt (2011). I have also shown how conservative evangelicals define dominion in terms of a caring stewardship (in contrast to previous empirical work). Previous empirical work also failed to acknowledge and explain other positive influences to environmental concern for conservative evangelicals such as leading less materialistic lifestyles, and adherence to governmental environmental legislation. I have also analysed the important differences between corporate and individual engagement that has not been presented in previous studies.

Thirdly, greater clarity has been achieved when comparing my own results with both previous quantitative studies, in Table 19, covering some 29 different themes. Most of the claims presented from previous studies were supported by my own data, but I have provided additional explanation and empirical evidence. Yet with several issues, my own data disagreed with previous findings, and in providing further evidence I have shown that a far greater complexity exists. Specifically this was in relation to how dominion is defined, effects of leadership, attitudes toward environmental legislation, and effects of eschatology. As previous studies often claim one issue or doctrine might be responsible for lower environmental concern, I have unravelled the complexity of what actually happens, as several doctrines and other additional inputs, negotiate positions for individual evangelicals, and I have attempted to explain this with the analogy of the graphic

equaliser. For instance, in taking just one doctrine, eschatology, I have shown it leads to far more diverse interpretation than previously thought, and it is not the main generator of poor environmental attitudes as previously claimed by Cho (2010).

Fourthly, I have shown how I have substantially built upon the brief and sketchy reasons given in previous quantitative empirical studies as to their results for conservative evangelical environmental attitudes; focusing upon dominion, eschatology, attitudes toward science and environmentalism representing a cultural clash. In comparing my own findings with Pepper, Jackson and Uzzel (2011) I have furthered understanding of the way normative theology can resist materialism.

Fifthly, in comparing my own work to the previous four qualitative studies I have attempted to further understanding in the following ways. In discussing my findings with those of Haluza-Delay (2008), I have shown the overlap that exists between the obstacles and opportunities for faith based environmental concern between my own target group and Catholic and Lutheran churches. However, it was also evidenced how obstacles were far stronger and more numerous in my own group, pointing to how environmental stewardship is more problematic for conservative evangelicals. I have also furthered understanding by showing some of the specific opportunities for faith-based environmental concern, evidenced in my own data. I have also drawn upon the climate change typologies created by Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs' (2009) to show how my own target group's attitudes toward the issue most commonly fit into 'developmental stewardship' yet some responses overlap in with the other two groups. In drawing upon the findings of Wilkinson (2010a and b) I have provided further explanation of how climate change is understood by my target group and the importance this issue could have in affecting broader creation care and also the relative importance of individual normative theological strands such as dominion, eschatology, God's sovereignty and evangelism. Whilst in comparison with the findings of DeLashmutt (2011), I have increased understanding in the areas of: positive normative theological influences on environmental concern; sin, repentance and environmental attitudes; missions and environmental attitudes; teaching and leadership; and the complexity of normative theological drives to environmental attitudes rather than just a failure of hierarchical communication.

It is in the concluding chapter, that the threads of this thesis's previous chapters can be drawn together, as we look back at the vista or expanse that has been covered so far and what the future might hold for conservative evangelicals and engagement with the environment.

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

---

---

### 9:1 THESIS SUMMARY

---

This interdisciplinary project brought anthropological research methods to a topic that spans both Christian theology and environmental studies. It has involved conducting specific empirical research about how conservative evangelical Christians value and understand the environment, bringing new evidence to bear upon a long established debate about the relationship the Christian faith has upon the non-human environment. In focusing upon Wales, it brings the research topic to a geographical area that has not been empirically explored in this way before. Likewise, in focusing upon conservative evangelical Christians, it homes in on a target group that has been largely neglected when addressing the topic.

The boundaries of this project were in the realm of bringing new empirical evidence to bear upon an area of investigation that has received a great deal of attention theologically, and a substantial amount of quantitative empirical work, but very little using qualitative methods. This thesis is therefore not aiming at the development of new eco-theology or arguing for certain biblical interpretations, but rather attempts to offer the reader a clear view of how the Bible influences the formation of environmental attitudes, for specific Christians within four different churches. As the first project to focus upon the topic in this way, relatively broad empirical boundaries were needed to have a breadth that was capable of incorporating a substantial number of themes that were revealed during fieldwork. Yet one of the main academic benefits of my project is that each of these issues that I have brought to attention, can now be addressed by the more detailed focus of future researchers that can perhaps hone in on just one theme, as is suggested later in this chapter.

The research topic was chosen as it represents an area of academic research that has been marked by over half a century of heated debate, fuelled by White's (1967) article, and that now has great practical contemporary relevance, due to current unresolved environmental issues. Through the collection of new empirical evidence, this research sought to open the 'black box' that has previously hidden those complex mechanisms that result in certain inputs leading to certain outputs in relation to the Christian faith and environmental attitudes and behaviours. Qualitative research, in locating the researcher in a very specific environment, offers to 'render the familiar strange' in effect to help with the understanding of a phenomena that is much more complicated than what was thought at the outset (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.32). It is then the researcher's task to make this complexity understandable and this adequately sums up the detailed work of this thesis. In opening up the private world of conservative evangelicals, in scrutinising that sphere whereby faith

and nature meet, I have provided an in-depth and multi-layered account of how normative theology of the Christian faith can influence espoused and operant theologies in the form of environmental attitudes and behaviours. This process of discovery has enabled a clearer and more insightful picture to emerge, in revealing the internal workings of the black box. Specifically the thesis has detailed the interrelationships between normative, espoused, operant and formal theologies, to a level that has not been evident in previous studies addressing the topic. The thesis has also revealed the doctrinal drives and influences to environmental attitudes and behaviours in more detail than has been done previously.

Each chapter within the thesis makes a distinct contribution. Chapters 1 and 2 have provided a rationale for conducting the research project. The literature review of Chapter 2 created a new synthesis, evaluated existing ideas and provided a comprehensive overview of this body of research and highlighted the shortcomings of previous research. Chapters 2 and 3 have justified both the chosen methodology and research methods, before detailing what my data collection actually involved, in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 identified and discussed the analytical framework chosen to aid the process of theological reflection, before modifying this framework to suit more closely my chosen target group and analysis of my own data. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 presented the data and analysed it. This included how conservative evangelicals in my sample experience creation, how their environmental attitudes are formed by the Bible and church practice, and finally how this fleshes out for specific environmental issues. Chapter 8 contextualised my own findings in light of the claims of previous empirical studies addressing the Christianity and environment debate.

## 9:2 SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTRIBUTION

---

Chapter 8 showed how in numerous ways the findings of this thesis add to current debate when brought in dialogue with previous empirical work on the topic. Yet I would now like to bring attention to implications of the thesis in three further specific spheres, although each of these have multiple components.

Firstly, in conducting a substantial literature review of previous empirical material in Chapter 2 (more than 40 studies when combining quantitative and qualitative work), the thesis offers a more detailed analysis of previous work conducted to address the Christianity/environment relationship than has previously been available. In bringing together for the first time the 37 quantitative empirical studies that test in some way the relationship between religiosity and environmental

concern, the thesis provides an original synthesis with numerous insights and therefore a substantial resource for future studies in Christianity and the environment. This has been highlighted in Figures 2-9, and 12, in Chapter 2. The thesis also forms part of a 'fifth wave' of empirical work in opening up the topic to the benefits of qualitative research methods, as discussed in Chapter 2:5:1. Identification of the fourth and fifth waves during this research has furthered knowledge and understanding in the broader field and the first four waves are graphically represented in Figure 9.

Previous quantitative empirical work addressing the topic often starts off from the premise that what is needed is a paradigmatic shift from traditional, often religiously informed values, to a new environmental paradigm, representing vastly different values and beliefs. It is therefore not surprising that those upholding values informed by normative theology of the Bible, will resist this most strongly. In Chapter 8 I scrutinised in detail the ways in which many of the measured used in the quantitative studies created a bias with a biblical world-view. They also often failed to offer detailed theological reasoning for the negative relationships they discovered between conservative evangelicals and environmental attitudes: a task which this thesis has redressed.

Secondly, in modifying the four voices of theological reflection, of Cameron *et al.* (2010), into the linear and hierarchical four voice model of theological reflection in Figure 15, I have furthered understanding in the area of research methods and theological reflection in addition to revealing the interrelationships and processes that exist within the black box. For instance, my own data has shown how normative theology wields great power and authority, bearing a close relationship with accepted formal theology, then in shaping espoused and operant theology. It realigns people in how they respond to situations ethically and how they prioritise and marginalise certain issues. In this way normative theology acts as a 'corrective mechanism' or 'thermostat', bringing espoused and operant theology in line with normative theology. However, although this is the case more generally, in practice these relationships are far more complex. For instance, I have also shown how different strands of normative theology can work together in harmony, leading to stronger espoused and operant theologies. However, reception and interpretation of different strands of normative theology can also be an arena of discord, creating a place of tension when expressed further down the hierarchy in espoused and operant theology. In this way normative doctrines can be complex to negotiate when applying a group of them (such as the evangelical environmental quadrilateral) to specific environmental issues. It has also been evident how a normative theological root or theme often triggers a response from respondents but then this is applied and fleshed out in far more detail by interviewees in their espoused and operant theologies than is evident within the initial normative teaching. I have also shown how one aspect of normative

theology can be interpreted differently by people in the same group, leading to vastly different espoused and operant theologies in relation to environmental themes. Conservative evangelical positions on environmental issues are therefore far from homogenous as in addition to having various interpretations of normative theology, different people can also give more or less weight to various normative stimulants when expressing their espoused and operant theologies. Personal interpretation can also lead to one aspect of normative theology being trumped or displaced by another aspect of normative theology. I have also shown how normative theology leads to espoused and operant theology in two distinct ways: from the 'inside out' such as with conversion and from the 'outside in', such as in the application of doctrines such as the Fall. It has also been the case that certain environmental issues lead conservative evangelicals to draw upon normative theology more strongly than others. Normative theology also resonates and leads to engagement with some environmental issues, but also leads to dissonance and disengagement with others. At times normative theology acts as an initial catalyst to espoused and operant theology which can then become self-perpetuating through experience and a rich operant theology; as operant theology perpetuates further operant theology.

Ideas that are not strongly tied to normative theology struggle to gain credence, such as with vegetarianism and notions of intrinsic worth. In a similar vein, addressing contemporary environmental problems via normative theology alone can be hermeneutically difficult, as normative theology lacks precise detail that may be required. Despite this it has been evident how changes can occur within peoples' understanding of normative theology which itself can be renegotiated and reapplied resulting in subtle changes in the 'thermostat' of normative theology, as it is reset in a different position resulting in a modified espoused and operant theology. Yet a hurdle to such change was noted in 'group culture' that can strongly perpetuate the accepted espoused and operant theology.

Normative theological drives result in numerous burdens that conservative evangelicals address and creation stewardship is not explicitly one of these. Normative theological interpretation also clearly sets a hierarchy of concerns. Normative theology informs operant theology and operant theology also 'checks out', confirms, or verifies the truths of normative theology for the believer. Normative theological interpretation blocks corporate engagement with environmental stewardship but allows individual engagement, resulting in incongruence between the two. Environmental engagement has uncertain and conflicting normative theological connections which can be seen to encroach upon other aspects of normative theology, and that there are specific warnings about environmentalism stemming from normative theology. A more radical operant theology noted with

some interviewees can block understanding of other normative theology, which can result in less engagement with environmental themes.

Thirdly, are those specific findings of my own data presented in Chapters 5-7 that address the longstanding Christianity and environment debate. Guth *et al.* (1993, p.377) criticised previous empirical work on the relationship between Christianity and the environment for being deficient in failing to specify which aspects of religious faith and practice influence certain environmental attitudes and why. In effect, previous studies could not clarify what lay inside the black box. This thesis addresses the call to move beyond simply testing the relationship between Christianity and the environment, but rather to come to terms with the mechanisms undergirding this relationship (Truelove and Joireman, 2009, p.808). In opening the black box, this thesis presents a far more empirically detailed and theologically rich analysis of how the Christian faith influences environmental concern, than in previous empirical studies that often suggested only one reason was responsible, such as dominion (Hand and Van Liere, 1984; Eckberg and Blocker, 1996) or eschatology (Guth *et al.* 1993, 1995). In being able to incorporate numerous environmental issues this thesis also furthers understanding from previous qualitative empirical work which has had an overriding focus upon climate change (Wardekker, Petersen and van der Sluijs, 2009; Wilkinson, 2010b, 2012; DeLashmutt, 2011).

In Chapter 6 I revealed the complexity of the relationship between conservative evangelicalism and the environment as informed by normative theological doctrines. Just as conservative evangelicals give normative theology of the Bible a prime and authoritative place in their lives, this results in conservative evangelicals seeing the world around them, creation itself, through the specific 'lens' of certain biblical Scriptures, themes and teachings. Taking this into account whilst analysing interviews showed how a quadrilateral of evangelical doctrines; the Fall, dominion and regeneration, evangelism and the gospel, and eschatology, all interplay with one another, under the auspices of the theme of God's sovereignty, as conservative evangelicals negotiate their espoused and operant environmental attitudes and behaviours. The interpretation of teachings in relation to these major evangelical doctrines are further complicated by the addition of anthropocentrism, attitudes toward broader environmentalism and differences between corporate and individual engagement. Together these form eight steps that conservative evangelicals negotiate when forming theologically rich espoused and operant environmental attitudes and behaviours. I used the analogy of the graphic equaliser to help explain this.

For society at large, numerous demographic and biographic variables can influence a person's environmental attitudes, yet conservative evangelicals in my sample have their own unique

identifying factors, of which their understanding of normative theology and specifically the Bible takes central place. Previous research has claimed that general demographic variables, without the addition of such things as religious identity, account only for around 15% of the differences noted in relation to environmental concern (Klineberg, McKeever and Rosenbach, 1998, p.734). This thesis has shown how this stands in stark contrast to the far more powerful influence that normative theology or interpretations of the Christian faith have, when conservative evangelical Christians express environmental attitudes and behaviours. These are commonly, if not unanimously, rich in espoused and operant theology that is informed by normative theology. This thesis therefore shows how conservative evangelical Christians value creation so differently to non-Christians.

Furthermore, in responding to the repeated findings of the quantitative studies in Chapter 2, which suggest conservative Christians care less about creation than other groups, my results have presented a detailed overview of the positive ways in which conservative evangelicals do value creation, in Chapter 5. This thesis has found that conservative evangelicals experience creation in diverse and positive ways (Chapter 5:1-5:5) and previous empirical work has failed to identify and incorporate these positive elements. In focusing purely on what is deemed to be the negative influences of normative theology and in using research techniques and questions that fail to tell the whole story,<sup>88</sup> has resulted in an error that my own thesis has been able to correct.

This thesis has shown how creation is deeply valued by conservative evangelicals, its beauty is marvelled at and enjoyed (Chapter 5:3); it leads to thanksgiving and praise as a provision of God (Chapter 5:4); creation is seen as having specific spiritual and physical health benefits (Chapter 5:5) and as a connection and place to draw close to God; conservative evangelicals herald special memories of times amidst God's creation, such as with holidays or hobbies (Chapter 5:3); creation is tied to notions of salvation and understanding creation is linked to personal conversion to the conservative evangelical faith (Chapter 5:2).

The process of conversion is centrally important for conservative evangelicals in informing their attitudes toward creation (Chapter 5:2), and this has not been previously mentioned in empirical literature addressing the Christianity and environment relationship. Therefore, with conversion and creation the thesis uncovered a deeply original and important contribution in the place conversion has in the way conservative evangelicals relate to the environment. As well as the act or process of conversion representing theological experience from the inside-out, conversion to

---

<sup>88</sup>As mentioned in Chapter 8, the exception being a brief mention of more positive elements such as creation inspiring awe and wonder, by Michael DeLashmutt (2011).



the conservative evangelical faith results in radically new ways of viewing and experiencing the environment. As well as accepting God as the One who created and sustains the environment, conservative evangelicals have a heightened perception of creation or 'see it with new eyes', after conversion. This includes seeing more deeply the beauty and complexity of creation, vividness such as colours and detail, and being thankful for creation.

After conversion creation is never seen in the same light again, as creation is seen as God's work and reflecting His glory. For conservative evangelicals, being surrounded by such environments aids their relationship with God in comparison to the inhibiting spiritual effects of industrial or human-made areas, as via creation they can gain symmetry with God, personal peace, are spiritually recharged, and enter states of prayerfulness. It is very much an operant theology rich with personal experience and feelings; being more diverse than can be derived from normative theology. The operant theology of the converted conservative evangelical can more profoundly express a personal experience than can be drawn from normative church teaching, yet still these experiences do not contradict normative teachings. Conservative evangelicals therefore espouse that creation means much more for converted Christians than unbelievers.

Furthermore, conversion is also closely linked to aspects of what I termed the evangelical environmental quadrilateral, specifically dominion and regeneration (Chapter 6:2). Here, an impact of Christian regeneration is that those with a new heart will sin less and have less detrimental impact upon the environment and care more for the plight of creation for instance. This is seen as the image of God being restored in humans to some extent, and human ability to steward the earth wisely, is rekindled. In ecological terms, this initial starting point offers a wealth of scope to lay a detailed and positive foundation for the later development of stewardship notions, as there is a desire to keep creation in good order and generally sadness is expressed when creation is abused or destroyed.

In Chapter 7 and Table 13, conservative evangelicals detail a wide range of environmental themes, mainly in terms of being concerned. Here, numerous issues are positively engaged with in espoused and at times operant theologies, in a way which is less influenced by some of the more negative interpretations of normative theology outlined in Chapter 6. Here respondents desire to live in clean environments and are against such things as air and water pollution and in favour of recycling; they are also strongly against deforestation, factory farming and animal cruelty. Normative theology also strongly leads to espoused and operant theologies that counteract materialism.

However, when it came to the mainstream contemporary issues of losses in biological diversity (Fig. 16, Tab. 14, 15), climate change (Fig. 17, Tab. 16,17) , and renewable energy (Fig. 18),

increasing levels of scepticism surface. For instance, 30% of interviewees mentioned not being concerned about species extinctions, 53% of interviewees not believing in or being uncertain about climate change, and two-thirds of those mentioning renewable energy being against this. Climate change, losses in biodiversity and renewable energy represent deeply contested issues for conservative evangelicals, and as I have shown, attitudes toward climate change and biodiversity are driven by complex normative theological elements. These flesh out as espoused and operant theologies resulting from complex manoeuvring between several normative doctrines and other influences, detailed in Chapter 6. With climate change and biodiversity, the issue of God's sovereignty is highly significant. Yet with renewable energy, links to normative theology were less evident as non-theological drives were noted. However, some attitudes were deemed to be linked to a perceived unnecessary interference with God's creation or despoiling of the environment.

Due to the powerful influences of normative theology, conservative evangelicals are more burdened for other, very specific, issues: promoting evangelism and meeting human needs are paramount, alongside other interests such as opposing abortion or supporting persecuted Christians. However, stewarding creation does have a potential to rise on the agenda, as awareness and increased understanding result in changed attitudes. For some interviewees, this even happened during the interview encounter (Table 18) and this thesis is significant in detailing exactly how, with empirical evidence, such changes take place. The thesis also showed how government legislation could spawn this movement.

In broader academic narratives in the field, the thesis has shown how, when focusing upon a specific group of conservative evangelical Christians, the arguments of White's (1967) study, are inadequate. Not only is anthropocentrism only one of eight or so themes, whereby normative theology of the Bible influences environmental attitudes and behaviours (Chapter 6), but it is also for many conservative evangelicals closely linked to stewardship and therefore positively influences environmental concern (Chapter 6:2). Rather than anthropocentrism being the main cause of disengagement with environmental stewardship as White (1967) suggested, this thesis has shown how for conservative evangelicals it is other normative influences that more strongly hold in check engagement with environmental themes, with the most evident within my own data being notions of God's sovereignty (Chapter 6:6) and pursuit of the evangelistic gospel (Chapter 6:4).

The thesis has shown how conservative evangelicals operate from a specific paradigm of knowledge and experience in relation to creation. The belief is that only born again believers can truly understand creation and its purpose: that you have to be in Christ, to fully appreciate and discern the meaning of creation. This biblical paradigm has different indicators to the broader

societal paradigm at work. Conservative evangelicals understand creation from within a very specific experience of life, from a faith which distinguishes them as earthly agents for God. This is evidenced in their praise and worship of the Creator. I believe this biblical paradigm has been revealed in this thesis, unearthing many new insights. I have shown how with conservative evangelicals there is a clear link between interpretation of text or normative theology and resultant action in the world as espoused and operant theology. Conservative evangelicals attempt to give absolute authority only to Scripture and nothing can trump the Bible as a source of guidance. Furthermore, conservative evangelicals argue there are no grounds to challenge the Bible. As evidenced in the data I collected for this project, it seems to be that the normative theology of the Bible speaks a great deal about creation in numerous and general ways, as evidenced in Chapters 5-7, but very little explicitly about creation care. I have shown how this lack of clear biblical instruction can lead to a more hesitant response to environmental themes in comparison to other issues that are deemed to have more explicit normative theological drives, resulting in specific burdens more clearly articulated in espoused and operant theologies (Chapter 7:7). It would also be a reason why the content of those hymns used by my target group, mainly being historical, have not yet incorporated any material about Christian responsibility for the environment.

In contributing to the broader debate about Christianity and the environment, findings of this thesis would lead me to contest the earlier claims of the *Green Bible*, noted in Chapter 1. In this way I would agree with Professor David Horrell, a leading scholar on the topic of Christianity and the environment, who summed up his response to the *Green Bible* in the title of his article 'The Green Bible: A Timely Idea Deeply Flawed' (Horrell, 2010). However, I would add that although the Bible is not 'green' neither does it need to be. Conservative evangelical Christians can express a high regard for creation and do not necessarily lead lives that are uncaring toward their environments, as this thesis has shown (Chapter 5, Chapter 7:2-3). Yet it is that these ways of valuing creation have different drives and indicators than what would be evident for those who claim to be 'environmentalists' or 'green'.

### 9:3 IMPLICATIONS

---

In many ways the Christianity and environment debate has stemmed from White's (1967) article. Implications from this thesis are that future research needs to take seriously the way in which anthropocentrism informs a positive care of creation rather than purely being problematic as White's thesis suggested. Future research also should take into account the multiple theological

drives that inform environmental attitudes and behaviours of which anthropocentrism is only one. Future studies in conservative evangelicalism and the environment need to take the complexity that I uncovered seriously. It is not acceptable for empirical work to continue to oversimplify and compartmentalise causal mechanisms or one aspect of normative theology and homogenise what in reality are diverse espoused theology and operant experiences within specific Christian groups.

This previous literature homogenised all conservative evangelical Christians as the same and presented them in a poor light with regards to environmental concern, yet they did this without really knowing what lay inside the black box. This thesis has shown that conservative evangelicals deeply value creation (Chapter 5), but when incorporating doctrines (Chapter 6), attitudes are diverse, resulting in complex behaviours (Chapter 7) that engage with some environmental issues yet retreat from others. Previous empirical work has wrongly labelled all conservative evangelicals as the same, and I suggest this should not continue in the future. This thesis has been more illuminating in showing both the complexity and diversity that in reality exists. Conservative evangelicals do not all have poor environmental attitudes and neither are they all the same. This thesis has shown how the differing world-views and value systems at work within conservative evangelical Christian beliefs and that of secular environmentalism need to be taken seriously. At numerous points in Chapters 5-7 this thesis has furthered understanding of the differences between the two. Future research should therefore start from a more neutral position that understands a biblical world-view and value system rather than just a secular one, as was often the case with previous studies (Schultz, Zelezny and Dalrymple, 2000; Eckberg and Blocker, 1989). Future work should not just focus upon a perceived need to impose a secular world-view upon a biblical one, but to understand both, and use measures and questions that do not just villainise conservative evangelicals or other religious groups without knowing or measuring the positive ways they value creation. A further related implication is that empirical work could test and highlight aspects of the values that inform secular environmentalism that people may be unaware of, of which this thesis has in part explained.

This thesis brought to the fore the centrally important place given to normative theology of the Bible by conservative evangelical Christians. One implication for future studies of conservative evangelicalism and the environment, for formal theology and action research, are that change can take place, although within the confines of normative theological limits, as this thesis revealed the way change took place for some during the interview encounter. The thesis has also shown how accepted formal theology for conservative evangelicals is very closely tied to normative theology as it attempts to engage with the Bible and church teachings, articulating understanding of normative theology and its implementation by those who use it. This was especially evident within the

incorporation of doctrines in Chapter 6. However, in the specific area of the Bible and the environment, or eco-theology, the influence of formal theology is very limited. This is due to eco-theology more generally forming part of a liberal Christian agenda. The implications for the future I would suggest are that far more work is required in this field from people within the conservative evangelical faith, or at least theologians who can work in a way which respects conservative evangelical beliefs and practices as it is only then that such work will gain any momentum and have potential influence. In this way they must take into consideration the doctrines and further theological influences detailed in Chapter 6. In addition, following an initial strategy of implementing stewardship or 'creation care' rather than a specific environmental issue such as climate change, could foster greater momentum. Future studies could also incorporate an understanding of how conservative evangelicals do have an agenda, but one which is very different to secular environmentalism.

In modifying the four voices model of theological reflection, the implications are that any future studies of conservative evangelical Christians, and perhaps even broader evangelical groups, need to take those modifications seriously, rather than just using the initial model devised by Cameron *et al.* (2010). I would suggest that my own modified four voices model of theological reflection (Figure 15), in conjunction with the insights provided in Chapters 5-7 and summarised earlier in this chapter are therefore of value to future studies in the fields of both practical theology and applied theology. In this way they also have implications in far broader theological fields than just the environment, and they could help foster understanding of how attitudes toward other issues are influenced by normative theology and then the interrelationships that exist between normative, formal, espoused and operant theologies. It also has implications for conservative evangelical groups and their leaders themselves, in that although the accepted norm is a very high regard for Scripture, in practice when applying this upon a topic like the environment, far more complex and diverse relationships are evident than just a standardised and uniform link between normative-espoused-operant theologies. This thesis therefore has broader implications for the fields of biblical reception and application, within faith groups.

This thesis has uncovered numerous ways in which further, more detailed modifications could be made of the linear and hierarchical four voices model of theological reflection I presented in Figure 15, based upon the initial model of Cameron *et al.* (2010), yet in conclusion I would suggest two of importance. As Cameron *et al.* (2010) reiterate espoused theology as 'theology embedded within what people say they do', this thesis has shown how this needs to be modified to incorporate a far broader personal discourse, such as a person's thoughts or meditation upon something; their

feelings; their memories; present activities or future plans; and in particular how they evaluate what they see others do or do not do, such as non-Christians. The initial model of Cameron *et al.* (2010) also needs to take into account, as evidenced in this thesis, what I termed a 'lens of contextualisation' which exists between normative and espoused/operant theology. This affects the way normative theology is applied. Such contexts include: personal life experiences such as countries people have lived in and specific environments they have seen; their financial status, formal study they have undertaken; non-theological media sources they have engaged with and hobbies. This thesis offers a new level of understanding in how the four voices of theology can work in a specific context, with such detail not being explicated in previous studies. It is in further research using the modified four voice model of theological reflection in such different contexts in the future that the enduring significance of my own findings can be scrutinised and confirmed.

#### 9:4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

---

With my own explorative endeavour, I have provided a unique glimpse of something previously hidden, yet in arriving at this point I am also critically aware that this process has led to further questions as well as answers. Seeing something more clearly does not mean that this phenomenon can now be left alone, but rather that what has opened up is the need for, in this instance far more qualitative empirical engagement with the topic. After conducting this project I am aware of many future opportunities in related fields that now exist. This thesis opens up numerous new levels of enquiry. These include such things as more focused work on the role of hymns and preaching in the formation of environmental attitudes and behaviours; the discrepancy between evangelical Christians and groups, such as 'Care of Creation' with more interest and knowledge about the environment compared with general congregations; the reasons for the different positions articulated by evangelicals about Christian engagement with the environment, as espoused within publications of formal theology; the role of nature in Christian pursuits such as evangelism as with such things as Christian mountain centres or outdoor pursuit centres run by evangelical organisations, which this research uncovered but were not in its remit to include. In addition, qualitative research to compare more liberal denominations with the results of my own work, such as whether or not differences were down to alternative theological and doctrinal interpretations or rather assimilating secular positions; comparison with other religions and spiritual beliefs in the formation of environmental attitudes and comparison to evangelical Christian groups in other countries, particularly in the developing world or from inner-city areas, to highlight how theological

interpretation may be located within other spheres of influence. I would also call for further qualitative work which focuses upon one of the quadrilateral of doctrines outlined in Chapter 6 in addition to the four other issues analysed later in that chapter. Other areas warranting further research include evangelicals and materialism, evangelicals and environmental laws, conversion and environmental attitudes, and the gulf between Christian environmental ethics and secular environmental ethics. The way respondents so vividly talked about their preference for rural environments rather than urban areas also offers an interesting avenue for contrast with the distinct discipline of 'Urban Theology' and more specifically the urban focus of the New Jerusalem as portrayed in the Book of Revelation. It would also be interesting to compare my own work with a possible future study which ascertains the extent to which certain people have an inherent emotional attachment to nature or the environment and whether the addition of normative theological interpretation nurtures or hinders this innate empathy, as this could lead to further understanding of the finding from my own data of how normative theology seems to operate from the 'inside out' as well as the 'outside in'. My own detailed use of the 'four voices of theology' of Cameron *et al.* (2010), or rather my own modification of the model to appropriately work in a conservative evangelical context, offers an analytical template that can be utilised in the fields of practical theology and applied theology by researchers in the future. In particular, the insights into the workings of the model summarised earlier in this conclusion would provide a context for comparison with future studies.

Specifically in the area of future formal theology of the academy, I have suggested in Chapters 5-8 a number of themes that emerged from my own data that I believe require further attention from either non-empirical or empirical work, and I will draw these together in conclusion. These include: exercising dominion as informed by Christian regeneration and sanctification; notions of human culpability in environmental degradation as a precursor to engagement with stewardship; the development of links between sustainability and normative theology and notions of intrinsic worth and normative theology; links between exercising stewardship as a part of living the Christian gospel; development of an authentic Christian voice for creation stewardship explicitly different from, and uninfluenced by, that of secular environmentalism; to address the fractured application of anthropocentrism in both blocking non-human concerns and yet informing human stewardship of non-human creation; to draw upon the positive experience of creation detailed in Chapter 5, in developing stewardship notions; the effects of normative theology in regulating creation care in or out of practise; the implementation of an official church stance on creation stewardship and pastoral teaching and help to crystalize stewardship as an explicit evangelical burden. I would also suggest that if formal theologians wish to influence evangelical Christians that formal theology has to align

with normative theology. However, the influence of formal theology is needed where normative theology lacks precise detail of contemporary relevance. Here, though, when formal theologians develop ideas that are not explicitly driven by normative teachings, they should still more broadly maintain normative orthodoxy or not go against it. In this way formal theologians can draw upon normative principles or starting points, then flesh out relevant detail lacking in normative teachings themselves, and I believe if this is followed, then more impact can be garnered within conservative evangelical constituents. As in Chapters 5-7, I showed how conservative evangelicals often completed this task themselves, and it could therefore be utilised by others in more specific and detailed ways.

Another avenue of further research could be in offering validation as to the extent that my own results are representative of a wider evangelical constituency. In looking at the extent to which my results are representative of wider Christian communities, I think that initially there would be very similar overlap with other AECW churches in Wales, and also those aligned with the FIEC which exist throughout the U.K. More broadly in the U.K., I believe similarities could be found with the Free Church of Scotland, or the Free Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland. Likewise there may be strong links to other conservative evangelical organisations in other countries around the world and specifically this may be the case in the U.S. There may also be a strong overlap with churches in the Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions such as the AOG and other independent evangelical churches, such as Baptist. Yet such a hypothesis is something that needs further empirical investigation.

## 9:5 PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

---

In articulating what the future might hold for conservative evangelical engagement with the environment, the seemingly irrevocable gap between secular environmentalism and evangelical Christianity is something that looms large. These divergent positions can be summed up with two recent observations and these examples also help bridge the gap between my own data and themes evident in broader discourses. The 2015 General Election took place as I wrote the final chapter of this thesis, and an *Election Briefing* published by the Christian Institute summarises policies and observations on the various political parties in the U.K. Many of the things that the Green Party stand for could be deemed polar opposites of Christian ethical positions, or the burdens that those taking part in my own study have mentioned (Chapter 6:7, and Figure 19). Referencing Green Party publications, manifestos and news broadcasts, the *Election Briefing* informs that the Green Party



was one of the first in the U.K. to officially support same-sex marriage (Christian Institute, 2015, pp.34, 10). The Green Party does not support restrictions to current abortion law, and although the party is against GM crops, former leader Caroline Lucas voted in favour of GM (four person) babies (Christian Institute, 2015, p.34). The Green Party supports euthanasia, supports equality on all issues of sexuality, but not religious liberty as it plans to phase out public funding of schools run by religious organisations (Christian Institute, 2015, p.34). The Green Party also wants to decriminalise drug use and prostitution (Christian Institute, 2015, p.34). In the context of these positions it would be hard to envision the Green Party's position on the environment gaining much of a voice with conservative evangelicals, as they would be alienated on so many other issues they deem important. Whereas quantitative empirical studies in Chapter 2 epitomised conservative evangelicals as the 'problem of fundamentalism' that needed addressing when it came to environmental concern, (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996) (Figures 11-12), in relation to the example given above conservative evangelicals would no doubt suggest it is the broader values that inform secular environmentalism that are deeply flawed and represent more of a toxic mix.

In the context of more specifically environmental themes and the values that inform such beliefs, an extract from a recently published article in the *BBC Wildlife* magazine (February 2015), is useful in again highlighting the great gulf or fissure that exists between conservative evangelicals and mainstream environmentalists. Famous conservationist and television broadcaster Chris Packham, in writing about the plight of the environment argues his position to the reading public. In starting off by informing us that 'Nature isn't ours to own, abuse or destroy' (Packham, 2015, p.25), there seems to be a biblical parallel, in that nature is God's and therefore worthy of protection. However, the author goes on to inform us that the health of the environment does not have any hope in the face of our 'rabid anthropocentrism' and 'arrogant short-sightedness', and that the mainstream development of biocentric values, or of putting earth first, is what is needed (Packham, 2015, p.25). Drawing on religious terminology, Packham sees the world on a collision course with 'apocalypse', but not that brought about by a sovereign God, but caused by what is deemed human abuse and inability to manage the environment, and the earth is therefore 'going to hell' (Packham, 2015, p.25). Using words like 'stupid' or the 'lunatics still denying we have an impact upon the global climate' (Packham, 2015, p.25), the author clearly presents a position that would instantly alienate the conservative evangelical Christian community, be seen as extremist, and offers no understanding of a biblical informed position. Specifically in relation to anthropocentrism and dominion, this is a foundational doctrine that is not negotiable for conservative evangelicals and when looking at specific issues like climate change, the freedom to express scepticism for numerous theological reasons, has been shown to be evident and important in this thesis (Table 17). The kind of reasoning

and seemingly extreme position offered by a famous environmentalist therefore sets out a trajectory which is unable to bring alongside the conservative evangelical Christian community, but rather calls for a radically different valuation of humans in relation to the environment than what the Christian faith offers. A favoured evangelical method for articulating identity is to establish defined cultural others who highlight their own theological and moral correctness (Bielo, 2009, p.55).<sup>89</sup> In relation to the environment, this could take place by describing the perceived incorrect world-view of environmentalists which then highlights the dangers of this view and the correctness of the evangelical position, with sadly the end result being a further distancing from genuine integration with environmental concerns by conservative evangelicals. Furthermore, my own data presented in Chapter 6:8 has at numerous points highlighted the complex and difficult relationship evident between evangelical Christianity and secular environmentalism, as two competing world-views, that the two examples given above have confirmed. This thesis is significant in being the first empirical study to articulate this gulf in such detail, and this again needs to be taken seriously with future research.

Conservative evangelical engagement with environmental action would require accounts of Christian responsibility for creation care, written from a conservative evangelical theological framework. More precisely to be thoroughly rooted in normative theological understandings and to be engaged with by formal theologians that are deemed to be 'from within'. However, this is a further area that requires more academic pursuit as most work on Christian engagement with the environment comes from a more liberal biblical interpretation and ecumenical perspectives. The resources 'from within' that conservative evangelicals can draw upon at present are very limited.<sup>90</sup> In looking forward I suggest that we need to respect the way conservative evangelicals understand and explain the concept of dominion and the anthropocentrism that informs this. This is something that cannot be challenged or left by the wayside, but is central to how the target group of my study relate to the non-human environment, and central to how they can become more involved with environmental stewardship, as articulated in my own data in Chapter 6:7. Whereas secular environmentalists may seek to change dominion, or 'rabid anthropocentrism', I suggest what is needed is the clear articulation of what dominion might mean and how this can be incorporated into Christian practice, and finally that dominion must be effectively engaged with, including explicit teaching on the topic: something which at present is missing, as my own data has shown in Chapter

---

<sup>89</sup> Although I believe this can be the case with conservative evangelicals, I think it also a strategy employed by numerous other groups within society.

<sup>90</sup> *As Long as the Earth Endures: The Bible, Creation and the Environment*, edited by Moo and Routledge (2014), is an up-to-date collection of essays by evangelical theologians.

6:9.<sup>91</sup> In contrast to the arguments of White (1967), that blame anthropocentrism informed by the Christian faith as being the culprit in environmental degradation, I believe my own data has shown that for specific groups with a high regard for normative theology, it is other theological interpretations which can result in more dissonance with environmental protection, as seen in Chapter 6. Rather, it is the thoughtful implementation of anthropocentric stewardship that offers one of the most fruitful avenues of hope for conservative evangelicals to care for creation. I argue that many eco-theologians go too far in relation to stretching biblical exegesis, attempting to challenge and overcome normative church teachings rather than implementing them, to the point whereby there is no prospect of taking conservative evangelicals with them on their journey. This can be seen with projects such as *The Earth Bible* (Habel, 2000, 2001; Habel and Wurst, 2000, 2001; Habel and Balabanski, 2002). The further eco-theology moves away from mainstream accepted normative evangelical doctrines, the less potential it has to influence and engage more conservative Christians. I confirmed this in Chapter 4 in articulating the accepted calibre of formal theologians working in the conservative evangelical field, and more broadly the fears and reservations conservative evangelicals have with liberal theology. Conservative evangelicals represent a precise constituency that can only be addressed by an equally precisely formulated agenda. Major normative doctrinal themes cannot be re-written to address a contemporary issue, no matter how pressing this is deemed to be.

My project has not been explicitly one of action research. However, as noted earlier (Table 18) it does have the potential to lead to self-reflection and evolving attitudes. Results themselves may provide the reader who has insider status with the desire to reflect and think more critically and constructively about how they would relate to these results and possible changes they would like to see in themselves and/or their contemporaries. In particular, Chapter 5 highlighted in great detail the vested interest that conservative evangelicals do have in creation and the positive ways they value their environments. A goal of practical theology and research has been defined as enabling greater understanding of the theological significance of practices, and perhaps reflection which enables it to engage more faithfully with fulfilling God's objectives, and interaction with the Bible (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, pp.24-25, 6). For conservative evangelicals this could mean thinking about whether or not they are responsible for the neglect and suffering of creation and how this can be addressed by a deeper understanding of both normative and formal theology. Such reflection may lead to prayer and a desire to seek individual and/or corporate repentance. Then, as the results

---

<sup>91</sup> This could focus upon such issues as to whether or not it is acceptable for Christians to eat produce from factory farming methods whereby the quality of life lived by such animals is deemed to be incompatible with Christian ethical deliberation and the living out of a wise, sensitive and godly dominion.

of this project have shown in Chapter 6, perhaps a more holistic negotiation of doctrines is required in relation to creation, with less extreme positions being held in relation to one doctrine, but a more harmonious integration in which dominion and stewardship is not blocked out by the interpretation of other Scriptures. There is perhaps a need to collaborate with professionals in the field, specifically Christian creation care organisations would be an obvious starting point. It is only then that the church can become fully equipped with the knowledge to play an authentic part in creation stewardship. For this to take place I believe creation care needs to be addressed corporately as an issue requiring attention in its own right; starting with a normative theology that will affect espoused and operant theology, aided by formal theology.

Research on evangelical Bible study groups suggests that the use of texts, including the Bible, is not static or stagnant and that reading can produce tension as well as continuity (Bielo, 2009, p.12). This tension, which I believe results when a contemporary issue such as the environment is brought to the arena of normative theological discourse, when addressed and resolved can lead to growth. A more concerted effort to utilise resources from within normative theology in tandem with inputs from formal theology, would therefore I believe, be beneficial. Such a normatively informed theology of creation stewardship would no doubt lessen the fear of environmental care which is not rooted in normative theology. Churches are undoubtedly important vehicles for the setting of values and agendas. Church institutions convey authority, often at the highest level, in promulgating normative theology. Information flow is continual and regular and multidimensional within the church setting. Therefore the potential role of faith groups and their leaders in confronting ecological challenges is imperative. The results of a 2007 Environment Agency survey showed that environmentalists and scientists voted religious groups and their leaders second out of fifty of the most important factors to combat environmental degradation (Marlow, 2008, p.3). Whereas Holland and Carter (2005) showed that changed attitudes toward creation stewardship were possible within a denomination such as the PCUSA, it is far harder for the target group of my own study. In contrasting my own findings with that of Haluza-Delay (2008) in Chapter 8, I also emphasised how in a conservative evangelical context, there were more obstacles. However, as my own data has shown in Chapter 5, in contrast to the views commonly put forward by previous empirical studies in Chapter 2, conservative evangelicals *do* have a great love and positive appreciation of the environment. This is centrally related to their faith; in their conversion, their praise, their worship and their lifestyles. The data in Chapter 5 has shown explicitly and clearly the 'depths of meaning' that creation has to conservative evangelicals and the vested interest that they do have in their environments and therefore its protection. I hope conservative evangelicals, in

drawing upon this data (which is very much their own) and meditating upon it, will be drawn to greater engagement with faith-based stewardship.

## 9:6 CONCLUSION

---

This thesis opens up for further scrutiny how a previously little understood ‘paradigm’ or habitus exists within a broader societal paradigm and the complex nature of the way this community attempts to live out an essentially theologically deduced relationship with their broader non-human environment. Essentially, it shows the power and influence of normative theology as a regulator of espoused and operant theology. After articulating the complex variety of normative drives evident in a specific group of conservative evangelicals, and their resultant diverse environmental attitudes and behaviours, it would be wrong for future empirical work to carry on as previously, to homogenise all conservative evangelicals in the same group as having poor environmental attitudes, in large part only because they do not accept an alternative world-view. This thesis therefore allows conservative evangelicals to speak back and to be taken seriously in contrast to previous empirical work.

In being a qualitative project, this thesis has resisted the long-standing temptation to engage in further top down, book based academia, but explicitly focused upon a bottom-up, or grass-roots level study. For this I have explicitly gone to find out what people do actually believe and why, an exercise that has been long overdue in relation to this topic. My study therefore forms a benchmark that can be placed geographically and historically and therefore provides an ongoing theological dialogue with evolving empirical understanding, as future work may gather newer data in different contexts. Again, taking the analogy of the scientific ‘black box’, whereby inputs and outputs are known, but those causal mechanisms that lie in-between remain hidden, I have collected and analysed data which has revealed those internal workings of the ‘black box’ and specifically how they relate to normative biblical teachings. In effect, I have unpacked the black box with hard empirical evidence, in bringing into the open and scrutinising those causal mechanisms that had previously been hidden, allowing a fresh understanding of what lays between those inputs and outputs that have been investigated so extensively since White’s (1967) article. This thesis has shown how, when looking at a specific academic territory, I did things differently to what firstly theologians and then quantitative social scientists have previously done. My hope is that this thesis offers a more comprehensive and insightful understanding of conservative evangelical attitudes toward the environment than has previously been documented and that in the long run this will have benefits in catalysing further academic scrutiny and debate, with the end result being increased

care by conservative evangelical Christians, for *all* creation. Furthermore, that this care should be deeply rooted in their own world-view and the rich array of values that their faith represents, rather than a concern forced upon them by the often vastly different value-laden drives of others, and that both academia and broader society can understand this and benefit from it.

## APPENDICES

---

---

### APPENDIX 1) THE THIRTY-SEVEN QUANTITATIVE EMPIRICAL STUDIES FORMING THE SYNTHESIS IN CHAPTER 2

---

- 1) Biel, A. and Nilsson, A. (2005).
- 2) Boyd, H. (1999).
- 3) Dietz, T., Stern, T.C. and Guagnano, G.A. (1998).
- 4) Djupe, P.A. and Hunt, P.K. (2009).
- 5) Djupe, P.A. and Gwiasda, G.W. (2010).
- 6) Eckberg, D.L. and Blocker, T.J. (1989).
- 7) Eckberg, D.L. and Blocker, T.J. (1996).
- 8) Ester, P. and Seuren, B. (1992).
- 9) Greeley, A. (1993).
- 10) Guth, J.L., Kellstedt, L.A., Smidt, C.E. and Green, J.C. (1993).
- 11) Guth, J.L., Green, J.C., Kellstedt L.A. and Smidt C.E. (1995).
- 12) Hand, C.M. and Van Liere, K.D. (1984).
- 13) Harper, C.L. (2008).
- 14) Hayes, B.C. and Marangudakis, M. (2000).
- 15) Hayes, B.C. and Marangudakis, M. (2001).
- 16) Holland, L. and Carter, J.S. (2005).
- 17) Jones, R.E. and Dunlap, R.E. (1992).
- 18) Kanagy, C.L. and Nelsen, H.M. (1995).
- 19) Kanagy, C.L. and Willits, F.K. (1993).
- 20) Klineberg, S.L., McKeever, M., and Rosenbach, B. (1998).
- 21) Kollmus, A. and Agyeman, J. (2002).
- 22) Lowry, R.C. (1998).
- 23) Michaud, K. (2009).
- 24) Pepper, M., Jackson, T. and Uzzel, D. (2010).
- 25) Pepper, M, Jackson, T and Uzzell, D. (2011).
- 26) Schultz, P.W., Zelenzy, L. and Dalrymple, N.J. (2000).
- 27) Shaiko, R.G. (1987).
- 28) Sherkat, D. and Ellison, C. (2007).
- 29) Stanford, V, I., and Brewer, E.S. (2011).
- 30) Tarakeshwar, N., Swank, A.B., Pargament, K.I., and Mahoney, A. (2001).
- 31) Truelove, H.B. and Joireman, J. (2009).
- 32) Weaver, A.A. (2002).
- 33) Weigel, R.H. (1977).
- 34) Woodrum, E. and Hoban, T. (1994).
- 35) Wolkomir, M.J., Futreal, M., Woodrum, E., and Hoban T. (1997a).
- 36) Wolkomir, M.J., Futreal, M., Woodrum, E., and Hoban T. (1997b).
- 37) Woodrum, E. and Wolkomir, M.J. (1997).

## APPENDIX 2) PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

---

### Participant information sheet

---

#### A STUDY OF WELSH EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY AND CREATION.

---

*Dear (enter name),*

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to assess what the focus and priorities are in the life of an evangelical Christian and how these things are related to biblical principles. Specifically the research includes both observation and conducting interviews as a means to gain an understanding of how evangelical Christians understand, value, and relate to God's creation. This study will increase understanding and awareness of the ways in which biblical and non-biblical factors affect a person's relationship to the natural world.

Why have I been chosen?

The study is focusing upon evangelical churches in North Wales that have doctrinal affiliation with the Associating Evangelical Churches of Wales (AECW). As a regular attender at one of these churches you have been selected as one of forty potential participants for the study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw, or a decision not to take part, will not negatively affect you or the project in any way.



What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign the consent form. This will give your consent for the researcher to contact you to arrange a convenient time and place to conduct the interview. The interview will follow a semi-structured format to enable several topics to be covered, in addition to allowing you freedom to discuss your views and experiences as an evangelical Christian, that are relevant to the study. Questions will involve a focus upon what creation means to you as an evangelical Christian. The interview will last about an hour. With your permission the meeting will be audio recorded to enable analysis of the data. You will not be identifiable in any way in any subsequent written work and your real name will not be attached to the data. You will not be expected to have prepared in any way for the interview.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no disadvantages or risks foreseen in taking part in the study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You have the opportunity to take part in a doctoral level study the likes of which has not been conducted before. In taking part you have the right to express your views as an evangelical Christian: gaining a voice for an often marginalised group. By sharing your experiences and knowledge you may aid in the development of an evangelical theology of creation themes. You may also benefit from being informed of the results of the project either personally or during a future presentation given by the researcher that you will be invited to attend.

What if something goes wrong?

If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

Prof. Robert Warner,  
Dean of Humanities,  
University of Chester  
Chester CH1 4BJ  
Tel. 01244 511980

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence (but not otherwise), then you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for this.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential so that only the researcher carrying out the research will have access to such information. Names of churches and individuals will not be attached to the data to ensure your anonymity.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be analysed and written up as part of a PhD level dissertation. It is hoped that the findings may benefit future research in similar areas, Christian churches in other localities, and the formation of a biblical response to issues relating to creation. Individuals who participate will not be identified in any subsequent report or publication.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being self-funded by the researcher.

Who may I contact for further information?

If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact:

*Mr Chris Crosby,  
Department of Theology and Religious Studies,  
University of Chester,  
Parkgate Road, Chester.  
CH1 4BJ  
e-mail: 1024222@chester.ac.uk*

Thank you for your interest in this research.

APPENDIX 3) CONSENT FORM

---

Consent Form

Title of Project: A study of Welsh Evangelical Christianity and Creation.

Name of Researcher: Mr Chris Crosby

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet, dated .....,  
for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my care or legal rights being affected.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

## APPENDIX 4) INTERVIEW FORMAT

---

Biographical data first: name, age, nationality, education, occupation and church background.

The following five questions are to be followed by detailed probing in line with the answers given by respondents.

### *Micro Level*

1) Could you explain to me what creation means to you? *If respondent answers only in terms of creationism then repeat: could you explain to me what the environment or natural world means to you?*

2) Could you tell me in what ways you are involved with creation or the natural world with the life that you lead? This could be with things such as; work, hobbies or conservation.

*Follow up: why do you do this activity, how do you feel when you do it? What influence or impact do you think it has?*

### *Macro Level*

3) Are there any environmental issues that you are concerned about or interested in?

*Prompts could include the three case studies: climate change, species extinctions and renewable energies.*

4) Do you think there is a place for evangelical Christians or groups of born again believers- (churches), to be involved with issues relating to creation such as environmental stewardship?

*Prompts to include: what do you feel the Bible teaches you about creation or the environment? The Bible teaches a lot about human-God and human-human relationships but what do you see it as teaching about God's relationship to broader creation and human relationships to broader creation? What does the dominion mandate of Genesis mean to you? Is there a role for the church to be involved with physical needs such as well as spiritual needs?*

5) That's all I would like to ask: but is there anything you would like to add that you think may be useful for my research into evangelical Christianity and creation? *To catch anything of importance missed in the interview.*

## REFERENCES

---

AECW Doctrinal Belief Statement. Available at <http://www.aecw.org.uk/en/believe.htm>. (Accessed 21/3/2016).

Archer, G.L. (1994). *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Updated and revised. Chicago: Moody Press.

Baptist Confession of Faith (1689). London. Can be viewed at: <http://www.salisburyemmanuel.org.uk/1689%20London%20Baptist%20Confession%20of%20Faith.pdf> (Accessed 21/03/2016).

Bauckham, R. (2010) *Bible and Ecology*. U.K.: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Bebbington, D. (1989). *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s*. Oxon: Routledge.

Bennett, Z. (2013). *Using the Bible in Practical Theology: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Surrey: Ashgate.

Bennett, Z. (2014). *Your MA in Theology: A Study Skills Handbook*. London: SCM Press.

Berkhof, L. (1968). *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*. Third Impression. London: Banner of Truth Trust.

Berkhof, L. (1966). *Systematic Theology*. London: Banner of Truth Trust

Biel, A. and Nilsson, A. (2005). 'Religious values and environmental concern: Harmony and detachment'. *Social Science Quarterly*, 86, pp. 178-91.

Bielo, J.S. (2009). *Words upon the Word*. New York: New York University Press.

Bliss, L., Cook, P., Kaweesa, S. and Ko, L. (eds.) (2012). *Lausanne Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel: Call to Action*. Consultation Paper, St Ann, Jamaica, November 2012. See <http://www.lausanne.org/content/statement/creation-care-call-to-action> (Accessed 8/7/2015).

Bouma-Prediger, S. (2001). *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*. Fourth printing, 2007. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.

Boyd, H. (1999). 'Christianity and the Environment in the American Public'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38(1), pp. 36-44.

Bookless, D. (2008). *Planetwise. Dare to Care for God's World*. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press.

Bromiley, G.W. 'The Authority of Scripture'. In Guthrie *et al.* (1970). (eds.) *New Bible Commentary* Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press. First published 1953.

- Brower-Latz, D. (2014). 'New Realities and Practical Holiness: Shaping Nazarene Responses to Urbanisation and Urban Poverty into the Future'. *Didache: Faithful Teaching* 13(2), pp. 1-10.
- Brown, E. (2008). *Our Father's World: Mobilising the Church to Care for Creation*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press.
- Bryan, J. M. (2012). Book Review 'Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology', by Cameron et al, (2010). *Theology and Ministry* 1 (2012): 10(1), pp. 1-2.
- Bryant, J. (2015). 'Managing Positionalities when Researching Healthcare Chaplaincy'. *DISKUS The Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions*. *Diskus* 17(1) (2015), pp. 37-46.
- Bunge, M. (1963). 'A General Black Box Theory'. *Philosophy of Science*, 30(4), pp. 346-358.
- Cairns, A. (1998). *Dictionary of Theological Terms*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Belfast: Ambassador-Emerald International.
- Callenbach, E. (1990) *Ecotopia*. New York: Bantam. First Published 1975.
- Cameron, H. (2012). "Life in all its Fullness" Engagement and Critique: Good News for Society. *PRTH* 5(1), pp. 11-26.
- Cameron, H. (2015). *Just Mission*, SCM Press: London
- Cameron et al. (2012). Reflections on the challenges of using the pastoral cycle in a faith-based organisation. BIAPT Conference, University of Chester, 10-12 July, 2012.
- Cameron, H., Bhatti, D., Duce, C and Watkins C. (2010), *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology*. Norwich, England: SCM Press.
- Cameron, H. and Duce, C. (2013). *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission*. SCM Press, London.
- Cameron, H., Richter, P., Davies, D. and Ward, F. (2005). *Studying Local Churches: A Handbook*. London: SCM Press.
- Carr, W.A. (2010). *The Faithful Skeptics: Conservative Christian Religious Beliefs and Perceptions of Climate Change*. MA Dissertation, University of Montana. Available at: [http://etd.lib.umt.edu/theses/available/etd-05202010-090318/unrestricted/Carr\\_Wylie\\_Thesis.pdf](http://etd.lib.umt.edu/theses/available/etd-05202010-090318/unrestricted/Carr_Wylie_Thesis.pdf) (Accessed: 1 July 2012).
- Carr, W.A. et al. (2012). 'The Faithful Skeptics: Evangelical Religious Beliefs and Perceptions of Climate Change'. *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 6:3 (pp.276-299).
- Carson, D.A., Moo, D.J. and Morris, L. (1992). *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

- Carson, D. A. (1978). *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: an Exposition of Matthew 5-10*. Michigan: Baker Books.
- Carson, D. A. (2000). *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*. Fourth Impression. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Carson, D. A. (2008). *Christ and Culture Revisited*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Carson, R. (1962). *Silent Spring*. New York: Fawcett Crest.
- Cartledge, M.J. (2013). 'The Use of Scripture in Practical Theology: A Study of Academic Practice'. *Practical Theology*, 6(3), pp. 271-283.
- Chawla, L. (1998). 'Significant life experiences revisited: a review of research on sources of pro-environmental sensitivity', *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 29(3), pp. 11–21.
- Charmaz, C. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage.
- Christian Institute. (2015). *Election Briefing 2015*. Newcastle upon Tyne: The Christian Institute.
- Christian Research. (2005). *How Christians use their money and why*. London: Christian Research.
- Christians, C.G. 'Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research'. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2011). (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Christie, A. (2013). 'Responding to Ordinary Christology: Issues and Challenges for Theological Education'. *Journal of Adult Theological Education*. 10(1), pp. 38-49.
- Cho, P.H.S. (2010). *Eschatology and Ecology: Experiences of the Korean Church*. Oxford: Regnum Books International.
- Cohen, J. and Cohen, P. (1975). *Applied Multiple Regression/Correlation Analysis for the Behavioural Sciences*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cook, P and Harrison, G. (1977). *Christian Hymns*. Bryntirion, South Wales: Evangelical Movement of Wales.
- Cook, P. et al. *Christian Hymns* (2004). Bryntirion, South Wales: Evangelical Movement of Wales.
- Cox, J. (2012). *Challenging Leadership: Mission-Shaped Presbyters in Methodist Fresh Expressions*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Durham University.
- Clough, D. (2009). 'The Anxiety of the Human Animal: Martin Luther on Non-human Animals and Human Animality'. In Deanne-Drummond, C. and Clough, D. (eds.) *Creaturely Theology: on God, Humans and Other Animals*. London: SCM Press.

- Coffey, A., Holbrook, B. and Atkinson, P. (1996). 'Qualitative Data Analysis: technologies and representations'. *Sociological Research Online*, 1(1).
- Conradie, E.M. (2004). 'Towards an Ecological Biblical Hermeneutics: A Review Essay on the Earth Bible Project'. *Scriptura*, 85, pp. 123-135.
- Cox, J. (2012). 'Challenging Leadership: Mission-Shaped Presbyters in Methodist Fresh Expressions'. PhD Thesis, Durham University.
- Cronshaw, d. (2014). Book Review 'Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology', by Cameron et al, (2010). *Journal for Adult Theological Education*, November 2014, 11:2, pp. 167-168.
- Davies, E. (2012). *Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones*. Darlington: EP Books.
- Davies, G. (2002). *A Light in the Land: Christianity in Wales 200-2000*. Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press.
- Davies, J.E. (1984). *Striving Together: The Evangelical Movement of Wales - its principles and aims*. Bridgend, Wales: Evangelical Press of Wales.
- Deane-Drummond, C. (1996). *A Handbook in Theology and Ecology*. London: SCM Press.
- Deanne-Drummond, C. and Clough, D. (eds.) *Creaturely Theology: on God, Humans and Other Animals*. London: SCM Press.
- Dekker, P., Ester, P. and Nas, M. (1997). 'Religion, culture and environmental concern: an empirical cross-national analysis'. *Social Compass*, 44, pp. 443-458.
- DeLashmutt, M. (2011). 'The Church and Climate Change: Understanding the actions and attitudes of Cornish Anglicans'. *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, 5(1), pp. 61-81.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2011). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Derr, T.S. (1975). 'Religion's Responsibility for the Ecological Crisis: An Argument Run Amok'. *Worldview*, January 1975, pp. 39-45.
- Des Jardins, J.R. (2001). *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*. Canada: Wadsworth.
- Dietz, T., Stern, T.C. and Guagnano, G.A. (1998). 'Social Structural and Social Psychological Bases of Environmental Concern'. *Environment and Behavior*, 30(4), pp. 450-71.
- Dillen, A. (2014). 'Power Balances and Bridges between Church Discourses, Academic Theological Views, and Family Experiences and Reflections on Family Life'. *INTAMS Review* 20, 226-235.



- Dixon, S.W. (2012). *In the light of a child: Adults discerning the gift of being*. D.Prof Thesis, University of Chester.
- Djupe, P.A. and Hunt, P.K. (2009). 'Beyond the Lynn White Thesis: Congregational Effects on Environmental Concern'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 48(4), pp. 670-686.
- Djupe, P.A. and Gwiasda, G.W. (2010). 'Evangelizing the Environment: Decision Process Effects in Political Persuasion'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 49(1):73-86.
- Duce, C. (2013). 'Church-based Work with the Homeless: A Theological Exploration of the Practices of Hospitality'. *Practical Theology* 6(1), pp. 87-103.
- Dunlap, R.E. and Van Liere, K.D. (1978). 'The "new environmental paradigm": a Proposed Measuring Instrument and Preliminary Results'. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 9, pp. 10-19.
- Dunlap, R.E. and Van Liere, K.D. (1984). 'Commitment to the dominant social paradigm and concern for environmental quality'. *Social Science Quarterly*, 65, pp. 1013-1028.
- Eckberg, D.L. and Blocker, T.J. (1989). 'Varieties of Religious Involvement and Environmental Concerns: Testing the Lynn White Thesis'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 28(4), pp. 509-517.
- Eckberg, D.L. and Blocker, T.J. (1996). 'Christianity, Environmentalism, and the Theoretical Problem of Fundamentalism'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 35(4), pp. 343-355
- Edwards, et al. (2000). *Praise! Psalms, Hymns and Songs for Christian Worship*. Bath: Praise Trust.
- Edwards, J. (2000 [17--]). *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God and other Writings*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. First published in different parts, 1734, 1741, 1750, 17--).
- Edwards, J. (2002 [17--]). *The Salvation of Souls*. Illinois: Crossway Books. Previously unpublished sermons from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Eisenhardt, K.M. (2002). 'Building Theory from Case Study Research'. In Huberman and Miles (eds.) *The Qualitative Researchers companion*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Emmerich, S. (2000). 'The Declaration in Practice: Missionary Earth Keeping'. In R. J. Berry (eds.) *The Care of Creation Focusing Concern and Action*. Leicester, England: The Inter-Varsity Press.
- Emmerich, S. (2003). *Faith-based stewardship and resolution of environmental conflict: An ethnography of an action research case of Tangier Island watermen in the Chesapeake Bay*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- EMW (2015). *About the EMW*. Available at <http://www.emw.org.uk/about-the-emw/emwleaders/> (Accessed 9/3/2015).

EMW. *Statement of Doctrinal Basis*. Available at <https://www.emw.org.uk/about-the-emw/beliefs/> (Accessed 21/3/2016).

Erickson, F. 'A History of Qualitative Enquiry in Social and Educational Research'. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2011) (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Erickson, M.J. (1985). *Christian Theology*. Michigan: Baker Book House. First published as three volumes, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Ester, P. and Seuren, B. (1992). 'Religious Beliefs and Environmental Attitudes, an Empirical test of the Lynn White Thesis in Fourteen Nations'. *Social Wetenschappen*, 35(1), pp. 20-39.

Fee, D. and Stuart, D. (2003). *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Third edition. Michigan: Zondervan.

Ferguson, S.B. (1981). *Discovering God's Will*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust.

Ferguson, S.B. (1987). *A Heart for God*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.

Fetterman, D.M. (2010). *Ethnography*. Third edition. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Fielder, G.D. (1983). *Excuse me, Mr Davies-Hallelujah! Evangelical Student Witness in Wales 1923-1983*. Bridgend, Wales: Evangelical Press of Wales.

Fowler, R.B. (1995). *The greening of Protestant thought*. Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press.

Fudge, R., Horrobin, P. and Leavers, G. (eds.) (1983). *Mission Praise*. Basingstoke, England: Marshall Morgan & Scott Publications.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Gerson, K. and Horowitz, R. (2003). 'Observation and Interviewing: Options and Choices in Qualitative Research'. In May (eds.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage.

Gibbard, N. (2002). *The First Fifty Years: The history of the Evangelical Movement of Wales 1948-98*. Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press.

Glasser, B.G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Graham, E., Walton, H. and Ward, F. (2005). *Theological Reflection: Methods*. London: SCM Press

Granberg-Michaelson, W. (1988). *Ecology and Life: Accepting our Environmental Responsibility*. Waco, Texas: Word Books.

Greeley, A. (1993). 'Religion and Attitudes toward the Environment'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 32(1), pp. 19-28.

Green Bible (2008). *NRSV The Green Bible: a Priceless Message that Doesn't Cost the Earth*. London: Collins.

Grudem, W. (2010). *'Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture'*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

Guth, J.L., Kellstedt, L.A., Smidt, C.E. and Green, J.C. (1993). 'Theological perspectives and environmentalism among religious activists'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 32(4), pp. 373-82.

Guth, J.L., Green, J.C., Kellstedt, L.A. and Smidt, C.E. (1995). 'Faith and the Environment: Religious Beliefs and Attitudes on Environmental Policy'. *American Journal of Political Science*. 39(2), pp. 364-82.

Guthrie, D. 'The Historical and Literary Criticism of the New Testament: Volume 1'. In *The Expositors Bible Commentary*. Gaebelin, F.E. (eds.) (1979). Michigan: Zondervan.

Habel, N.C. (eds.) (2000). *The Earth Bible Volume One: Readings from Perspective of Earth*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press.

Habel, N.C. (eds.) (2001). *The Earth Bible Volume Four: The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press.

Habel, N.C. and Balabanski, V. (eds.) (2002). *The Earth Bible Volume Five: The Earth Story in the New Testament*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press.

Habel, N.C. and Wurst, S. (eds.) (2000). *The Earth Bible Volume Two: The Earth Story in Genesis*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press.

Habel, N.C. and Wurst, S. (eds.) (2001). *The Earth Bible Volume Three: The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press.

Haluza-Delay, R. (2008). 'Churches Engaging the Environment: An Autoethnography of Obstacles and Opportunities'. *Human Ecology Review*, 15(1), pp. 71-81.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. Third edition. Abingdon, England: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. (2002). 'Ethnography and Realism'. In Huberman, A.M. and Miles, M.B. (eds.) *The Qualitative Researchers Companion*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Hand, C.M. and Van Liere, K.D. (1984). 'Religion, mastery-over-nature and environmental concern'. *Social Forces* 63, pp. 555-70.

- Harper, C.L. (2008). 'Religion and the Environment'. *Journal of Religion and Society* 3, pp. 1941-8450.
- Hayes, B.C. and Marangudakis, M. (2000). 'Religion and Environmental Issues within Anglo-American Democracies'. *Review of Religious Research*, 42(2), pp. 159-174.
- Hayes, B.C. and Marangudakis, M. (2001). 'Religion and attitudes towards nature in Britain'. *British Journal of Sociology*, 52(1), pp. 139-155.
- Hayward, S. F. (2011). *Mere Environmentalism: A Biblical Perspective on Humans and the Natural World*. Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Heath, C. and Hindmarsh, J. (2003). 'Analysing Interaction: Video, Ethnography and Situated Conduct'. In May, (eds.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage.
- Henwood, G. (2015). 'Is Equal Marriage an Anglican Ideal?' *Journal of Anglican Studies*. Vol. 13(1), pp. 92-113.
- Hinde, R.A. (1999). *Why gods persist: A scientific approach to religion*. London: Routledge.
- Holland, L. and Carter, J.S. (2005). 'Words v deeds: A comparison of religious belief and environmental action'. *Sociological Spectrum: Mid-South Sociological Association* 5(6), pp. 739-753.
- Horden, W. E. (1968). *A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology*. Revised edition. New York: Macmillan.
- Horrell, D.G. (2010). *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*. London: Equinox.
- Horrell, D.G. (2010) 'The Green Bible: A Timely Idea Deeply Flawed'. *Expository Times* 121, pp. 180-186.
- Horrell, D.G., Hunt, C. and Southgate, C. (2010). *Greening Paul: Reading the Apostle in a time of Ecological Crisis*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press.
- Horrell, D.G.; Hunt, C.; Southgate, C. and Stavrakopoulou, F. (eds.) (2010). *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*. London: T&T Clark International.
- Howell, B.M. (2007). 'The Repugnant Cultural Other Speaks Back: Christian Identity as Ethnographic Standpoint'. *Anthropological Theory*, 7, pp. 371-391.
- Huberman, A.M. and Miles, M.B. (2002). *The Qualitative Researchers Companion*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Idestrom, J. (2014). 'In Dialogue with the Gospel. Reflections on a Method for Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology'. *Ecclesial Practices*, 1, pp. 72-91.

- Johnson, B. (1962). 'Ascetic Protestantism and Political Preference'. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26, pp. 35-46.
- Johnson, B. (1964). 'Ascetic Protestantism and Political Preference in the Deep South'. *American Journal of Sociology*, 69, pp. 359-366.
- Johnson, B. (1967). 'Theology and the Position of Pastors on Public Issues'. *American Sociological Review*, 32, pp. 433-42.
- Jones, R.E. and Dunlap, R.E. (1992). 'The social bases of environmental concern: Have they changed over time?' *Rural Sociology*, 57(1), pp. 28-47.
- Kanagy, C.L. and Nelsen, H.M. (1995). 'Religion and Environmental Concern: Challenging the dominant assumptions'. *Review of Religious Research*, 37, pp. 33-45.
- Kanagy, C.L. and Willits, F.K. (1993). 'A greening of religion? Some evidence from a Pennsylvania sample'. *Social Science Quarterly*, 74, pp. 674-83.
- Kearns, L. (1996). 'Saving the Creation: Christian Environmentalism in the United States'. *Sociology of Religion*, 57(1), pp. 55-70.
- King, N. and Horrocks, C. (2010). *'Interviews in Qualitative Research'*. Cornwall, U.K.: Sage.
- Klineberg, S.L., McKeever, M., and Rosenbach, B. (1998). 'Demographic predictors of environmental concern: It does make a difference how it's measured'. *Social Science Quarterly*, 79, pp. 734-753.
- Kollmus, A. and Agyeman, J. (2002). 'Mind the gap: Why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behaviour?' *Environmental Education Research*, 8(3), pp. 239-60.
- Lawler, S. (2003). 'Narrative in Social Research'. In May, T. (eds.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage.
- Leach, J. (2015). 'The end of Theological Education – is Wisdom the Principle thing?' *Holiness* 1(1), pp. 21-55.
- Leiss, W. (1994 [1972]). *The Domination of Nature*. 1998 reprint. Quebec, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Lewis, C.S. (1998a). *On Faith*. London: Harper Collins.
- Lewis C.S. (1998b). *On Joy*. London: Harper Collins.
- Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (2002). 'Judging the Quality of Case Study Reports'. In Huberman, A.M. and Miles, M.B. (eds.). *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Linnemann, E. (Trans. By Yarbrough, R. W.) (1990). *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* Michigan: Baker Books.

Lloyd-Jones, M. (2003a). *Great Doctrines of the Bible*. Illinois: Crossway Books. Originally published as three books. First published as three books, 1996, 1997 and 1998.

Lloyd-Jones, M. (2003b [1976]). *The Christian Warfare: An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10-13*. Michigan: Baker Books.

Lloyd-Jones, M. (2010). *The Gospel in Genesis*. Leominster: Day One Publications.

Lowry, R.C. (1998). 'Religion and the demand for membership in environmental citizen groups'. *Public Choice* 94, pp. 223-240.

MacArthur, J. ed. (1992). *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*. Dallas: Word Publishing.

MacArthur, J. (1993). *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World*. Illinois: Crossway Books.

Malley, B. (2004). *How the Bible Works: an Anthropological Study of Evangelical Biblicism*. Walnut Creek, California: Altamira Press.

Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge.

Marlow, H. (2008). *The Earth is the Lord's. A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues*. Cambridge: Grove Books.

Mason, J. (2003). 'Qualitative Interviewing: Asking, Listening and Interpreting'. In May, T. (eds.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage.

May, T. (ed.) (2003). *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage.

McNeill, J. (2000). *Something New Under the Sun: an Environmental History of the Twentieth Century*. London: Penguin.

Michaud, K. (2009). 'The Good Steward: The Impact of Religion on Climate Change Views'. Paper delivered to the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, March 2009.

Miller, K.D. (2015). Organizational Research as Practical Theology. *Organizational Research Methods* 18(2), pp.276-299.

Moo, D.J. and Routledge, R. (eds.) (2014). *As Long as the Earth Endures: The Bible, Creation and the Environment*. Nottingham: Apollos.

Morris, J. (2008). *The Young Earth*. United States: Master Books.

Mowat, H. (2011). Book Review 'Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology, by Cameron et al, (2010). *Practical Theology* 4(3), p.375-376.

Murray, I.H. (2000). *Evangelicalism Divided. A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950-2000*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust.

Murray, I.H. (1973). *The Forgotten Spurgeon*. Second edition. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust.

Nell, I. A. (2015). 'Blended Learning: Innovation in the teaching of practical theology to undergraduate students from diverse African backgrounds'. *Online Journal of African Affairs*. Vol. 4(2), May 2015, p.26-32.

Neuman, W.L. (2011). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.

Northcott, M.S. and Scott, P.M. (eds.) (2014). *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives*. Oxon: Routledge.

Olyott, S. (2006). *This Way to Godliness*. Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press.

Olyott, S. (2005). *Preaching Pure and Simple*. Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press.

Olyott, S. (2014). *Something must be Known and Felt*. Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press.

Packer, J.I. (1958). *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing.

Packer, J.I. (1975). *Knowing God*. Second edition. London: Hodder and Stoughton. First published 1973.

Packer, J.I. (1998 [1979]). *God Has Spoken*. Fourth edition. London: Hodder and Stoughton. First published 1979.

Packer, J.I. (2003). 'The Preacher as Theologian'. In Green, C. and Jackman, D. (eds.) *When God's Voice is Heard*. New edition. Leicester: Inter Varsity Press.

Packham, C. (2015). 'We must take up John Muir's battle cry over a century ago to put "Earth First"'. *BBC Wildlife Magazine*, 33(2), pp. 25.

Pallant, D. (2014). "What is the Salvation Army's theology as we serve a suffering humanity?" Paper presented at 2014 USA Salvation Army Conference for Social Work and Emergency Disaster Services. 25-28 March, Orlando, Florida.

Pedhazur, E.J. (1982). *Multiple Regression in Behavioural Research*. USA: The Dryden Press, Saunders College Publishing.

Pepper, M., Jackson, T. and Uzzel, D. (2010). 'A Study of Multidimensional Religious Constructs and Values in the United Kingdom'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49(1), pp.127-146.

- Pepper, M, Jackson, T and Uzzell, D. (2011). 'An Examination of Christianity and Socially Conscious and Frugal Consumer Behaviours'. *Environment & Behaviour* 43(2), pp. 274-290.
- Perakyla, A. and Ruusuvuori, J. (2011). 'Analysing Talk and Text'. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Pink, A.W. (1975). *The Attributes of God*. Michigan: Baker Book House.
- Piper, J. (1996). *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. Expanded edition. Oregon: Multnomah Books.
- Piper, J. (1998). *The Pleasures of God*. Ross-Shire: Christian Focus Publications.
- Piper, J. (2004). *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy*. Illinois: Crossway Books.
- Piper, J. and Grudem, W. (1991) (eds.). *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Second impression, 2006. Illinois: Crossway Books.
- Ponterotto, J.G. (2006). 'Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research concept, Thick Description'. *The Qualitative Report*, 11(3), pp. 538-549.
- Prime, D. (2001). *Bible Answers*. Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications. First published as two books, 1967, [1991] and 2000.
- Read, C. (2012). Book Review 'Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology', by Cameron et al, (2010). *Theology*, vol. 115(1), p. 61.
- Ruether, R.R. (1992). *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Richards, L. (2010). *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.
- Roach, J. C. (2011). Book Review 'Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology', by Cameron et al, (2010). *Journal of Multi-disciplinary Research*, 3(2), 2011, pp. 125-127.
- Sanchez-Jankowski, M. (2003). 'Representation, Responsibility and Reliability in Participant-Observation'. In May (eds.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage.
- Schultz, P.W., Zelenzy, L and Dalrymple, N.J. (2000). 'A multinational perspective on the relation between Judeo-Christian religious beliefs and attitudes of environmental concern'. *Environment and Behavior*, 32, pp. 576-91.
- Schumacher, S. (2013). A Modern Day Renaissance: The Christian Church as an Unconventional Locus for Creative Arts Research. ESRC Research Capacity Building Clusters: Summit Conference 2013. 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> June, Aston University, p. 16-25.



- Seale, C. (2000). *The Quality of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Shaiko, R.G. (1987). 'Religion, Politics and Environmental Concern: A powerful mix of passions'. *Social Science Quarterly*, 68, pp. 244-62.
- Shehu, M. U. (2015). 'Religion and the Environment in Northeast Nigeria: Dominion, Stewardship, Fatalism and Agency'. PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield.
- Sherkat, D. and Ellison, C. (2007). 'Structuring the Religion-Environment Connection: Identifying Religious Influences on Environmental Concern and Activism'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 46(1), pp. 71–85.
- Shepherd, N. (2012). 'Action Research as Professional Development: Educating for Performative Knowledge and Enhancing Theological Capital'. *JATE* 9(2), p.121-138.
- Shipman, M. (1997). *The Limitations of Social Research*. Harlow, Essex: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Sieber, J.E. and Tolich, M.B. (2013). *Planning Ethically Responsible Research*. London: Sage.
- Sittler, J. (1954). 'A Theology for Earth'. *Christian Scholar*, 37, pp. 367-374.
- Sittler, J. (1962). 'Called to Unity'. *Ecumenical Review*, 142, pp. 177-187.
- Sittler, J. (1964). *Care of the Earth and other university sermons*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Smith, B. (2000). *The Way of the Word*. South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press.
- Sorley, C. (2009). *Christ and Creation: Our Biblical Calling to Environmental Stewardship*. Author.
- Spurgeon, C.H. (1997). *Farm Sermons: Messages to Country Congregations*. Bridgend: Bryntirion Press. First published 1882.
- Stanford, V.I. and Brewer, E.S. (2011). 'Dominion or Stewardship: Understanding the role of Religiosity in Forming Attitudes about the Environment through Pathway Analysis'. Presentation Paper for the American Political Science Association Annual Conference, September 1-4, 2011.
- Strauss, A.L. and Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- Steen, J. (2010). Book Review 'Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology', by Cameron *et al*, (2010). *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, 7(1), pp. 108-109.
- Stott, J. (1992). *The Contemporary Christian*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Stott, J. (1982). *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

- Stott, J. (1999). *The Birds our Teachers: Biblical Lessons from a Lifelong Bird-watcher*. Oxon: Candle Books.
- Swinton, J. and Mowat, H. (2006). *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. London: SCM Press.
- Taylor, S. (ed.) (2002). *Ethnographic Research*. London: Sage.
- Taylor, S.J. and Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tarakeshwar, N., Swank, A.B., Pargament, K. I., and Mahoney, A. (2001). 'The sanctification of nature and theological conservatism: A study of opposing religious correlates of environmentalism'. *Review of Religious Research*, 42, pp. 387-404.
- The Wakeman Trust (1994) *Psalms and Hymns of Reformed Worship*. Frome, Somerset: Butler and Tanner.
- Thompson, J. Pattison, S. and Thompson R. (2008). *SCM Studyguide to Theological Reflection*. London: SCM.
- Thompson, S. and Barton, M. (1994). 'Ecocentric and anthropocentric attitudes toward the environment'. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 14, pp. 149-157.
- Tjernstrom, T. and Tietenberg, T. (2007). 'Do differences in attitudes explain differences in national climate change policies?' *Ecological Economics*, 65, pp. 315-324.
- Trow, M. (1957). 'Participant Observation and Interviewing: a Comparison' in McCall, G. and Simmons, J. (eds.) (1969). *Issues in Participant Observation*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
- Truelove, H.B. and Joireman, J. (2009). 'Understanding the Relationship between Christian Orthodoxy and Environmentalism'. *Environment and Behaviour*, 41(6), pp. 806-820.
- Tyler, D. (2003). *Creation- Chance or Design?* Darlington: Evangelical Press.
- Van Houtan, K.S. and Northcott, M.S. (eds.) (2010). *Diversity and Dominion: Dialogues in Ecology, Ethics and Theology*. Oregon: Cascade Books.
- Van Liere, K. and Dunlap, R. (1980). 'The social base of environmental concern: A review of hypotheses, explanations and empirical Evidence'. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 44(2), pp. 181-97.
- Wanliss, J. (2010). *Resisting the Green Dragon: Dominion not Death*. USA: Bookmasters.
- Wardekker, J.A., Petersen, A.C., and Van der Sluijs, J.P. (2009). 'Ethics and public perception of climate change: Exploring the Christian voices in the US public debate'. *Global Environmental Change*, 19(4), pp. 512-21.

- Weaver, A.A. (2002). 'Determinants of environmental attitudes: a five-country comparison'. *International Journal of Sociology*, 32(1), pp. 77-108.
- Weeks, N. (1988). *The Sufficiency of Scripture*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust.
- Weigel, R.H. (1977). 'Ideological and demographic correlates of proecology behaviour'. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 103, pp. 39-47.
- White, Jr., L. (1967). 'The historical roots of our ecological crisis'. *Science*, 155, pp. 1203-07.
- White, Jr., L. (1973). 'Continuing the Conversation'. In I. G. Barbour (eds.) *Western Man and Environmental Ethics*. Philippines: Addison Wesley Publishing Company Inc.
- Whitford, A.B. and Wong, K. (2009). 'Political and Social Foundations of Environmental Sustainability'. *Political Research Quarterly*, 62(1), pp.190-204.
- Whitney, D.S. (1991). *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress.
- Wilkinson, K. (2010a). *Caring for creations climate: Climate change discourse, advocacy and engagement among American evangelicals*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford University.
- Wilkinson, K. (2010b). 'Climate's Salvation? Why and how American Evangelicals are engaging with Climate Change'. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 52(2), pp. 47-57.
- Wilkinson, K. (2012). *Between God & Green: How Evangelicals are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change*. New York: Open University Press.
- Williams, G. (1991). *The Welsh and Their Religion: Historical Essays*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Wilson, J. and Janoski, T. (1995). 'The contribution of religion to volunteer work'. *Sociology of Religion*, 56, pp. 137-52.
- Woodrum, E. and Hoban, T. (1994). 'Theology and religiosity effects on environmentalism'. *Review of Religious Research*, 35(3), pp. 195-206.
- Wolkomir, M.J., Futreal, M., Woodrum, E., and Hoban T. (1997a). 'Denominational subcultures of environmentalism'. *Review of Religious Research*, 38(4), pp. 325-43.
- Wolkomir, M.J., Futreal, M., Woodrum, E., and Hoban T. (1997b). 'Substantive religious belief and environmentalism'. *Social Science Quarterly*, 78(1), pp. 96-108.
- Wood, N. (2011). Book Review 'Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology', by Cameron et al, 2010). *Regent's Review*, April 2011, 2(2), pp. 27-28.
- Woodrum, E. and Wolkomir, M.J. (1997). 'Religious effects on environmentalism'. *Sociological Spectrum*, 17(2), pp. 223-34.

World Health Organisation. (2009). *Research Ethics Committees: Basic Concepts for Capacity Building*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO.

Young, P. (2010). 'Reduce, reuse, recycle, reverse: A study of Christian Churches in Nova Scotia acting on Environmental Issues'. MSc dissertation, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

#### Audio-Visual Materials

*State of the Planet*. (2004). Directed by David Attenborough (DVD). BBC Worldwide LTD.

*The Great Global Warming Swindle*. (2007). Directed by Martin Durkin (DVD). WAGtv, U.K.

*When Heaven Meets Earth: How a Faithful Few Changed Everything*. (2008). Directed by Susan Emmerich (DVD). Skunkfilms.

*Climate Change and Creation: A Really Inconvenient Truth*. (2007). By John Mackay. (DVD). Creation Research, Australia.

*Climate Change: The God Factor*. (2008). By John Mackay. (DVD). Creation Research, Australia.