

Research Article

The Creation Mandate and the Decalogue as Pillars of a Triperspectival Christian Ethic of Earth Stewardship

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Abstract

This paper advances a triperspectival Christian ethic of Earth stewardship-existential, deontological, and teleological-grounded in the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:28 and the Decalogue interpreted in both their narrow and expansive senses. It contends that God's disposition toward creation and humanity's vocation as its steward have been established since the beginning, providing a stable theological foundation for evaluating contemporary environmental claims. Against the backdrop of modern climate-change alarmism, the study offers a biblically informed critique that rejects the idolatrous personification of "Mother Nature" and reaffirms that "the Earth is not God, but it belongs to him, and so do we." The paper argues that faithful stewardship requires integrating the Sabbath's ecological, economic, and humanitarian dimensions into Christian practice. It further demonstrates how the Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Commandments collectively summon believers to servant leadership, the protection of human life, and particular concern for the poor-especially in light of the disproportionate burdens that aggressive environmental policies impose on developing nations. Synthesizing these themes, the study maintains that Christian Earth stewardship must unite prudent skepticism, moral responsibility, and practical compassion. Such an ethic enables the church to care for creation in ways that uphold human flourishing, safeguard the vulnerable, and ultimately magnify the glory of God.

Keywords

Cultural Mandate, Creation Mandate, Earth Stewardship, Climate Alarmism, Environmentalism, Creation Care

1. Introduction

As recently as the 2018 Gallup poll, climate change ranked near the bottom of Americans' environmental concerns. That situation has shifted markedly. A Google search conducted on May 15, 2023, for the query "What are the largest problems facing the 21st century?" returned more than 1.4 billion results, many of which place environmental issues-especially climate change-at or near the top. Climate change has thus become a cultural flashpoint. It has long since migrated from the domain of meteorology into politics and, subsequently, into religion [10]. As a result, public opinion has polarized into two broad

camp: those who do not regard a modestly warmer Earth as an existential threat, and those who warn of an impending climate apocalypse unless radical reductions in atmospheric carbon dioxide are undertaken immediately. The science is not settled-neither by the empirical data nor by the contested definition of science itself. Yet one reality has been settled since the dawn of creation: what God thinks about the environment and what humanity's responsibility is as the Earth's caretaker.

This makes the topic a matter of genuine importance for the church. The present paper examines the ethics of Christian

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Earth stewardship beginning with the creation narrative in Genesis, where humanity is placed in a garden and given the mandate to “rule over” and “subdue” the Earth (Genesis 1:28). Several of the Ten Commandments will serve as normative guides—broadly and narrowly, negatively and positively. The first commandment prohibits the worship of false gods, including contemporary substitutes such as “Mother Nature” or Gaia. The fourth commandment offers an implied warning against secular environmentalism and its misguided approach to land use. The fifth commandment calls Christians to exercise servant leadership toward the Earth. The sixth commandment extends logically to the protection and preservation of the environment for the sake of God’s creation, particularly for the health and well-being of the people who inhabit it. And the eighth commandment underscores the biblical concept of stewardship. Any responsible Christian ethic must also consider the poor and the disproportionate harm that radical environmental policies inflict on the Developing World. Finally, this paper will develop a Christian triperspectival ethic—existential, deontological, and teleological—arguing that Christians should serve as a voice of reason in environmental debates. Caring for God’s creation is our duty and fulfilling that duty benefits all people while giving glory to God.

2. Why the Church Must Question Climate Alarmism

On any given day, social media feeds—mine included—are saturated with links to articles, graphs, and videos addressing climate change. Even the evolution of the terminology is instructive. Only a short time ago, the dominant expression was *global warming*; prior to that, public discourse was marked by fears of an impending ice age, mass starvation, and global overpopulation. None of these predicted catastrophes materialized, yet many of the experts responsible for such forecasts continue to receive prominent media attention [29, 33].

Within the United States, long-term historical data for weather-related phenomena—hurricane frequency and intensity, tornado incidence, and wildfire occurrence in western states—show multi-decadal lows, despite a steady rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide since the Industrial Revolution. Although global temperatures have increased over the past century, the observed warming is approximately half of what climate models projected. Meanwhile, the Earth has exhibited significant “greening,” as elevated atmospheric carbon dioxide has enhanced photosynthesis, contributing to record levels of global grain production. Yet these data points rarely surface in mainstream reporting unless one deliberately seeks them out [17, 38].

Climate change, in principle, should not be denied. Climate variability is one of the defining features of Earth’s history. Historical records, dendrochronological studies, and ice-core

analyses all demonstrate that the planet has cycled through both warmer and cooler epochs over the past two millennia¹ [8, 9]. The Roman Warm Period (1–500 AD) and the Medieval Warm Period (950–1250 AD) were both warmer than the present era, whereas the Little Ice Age (1300–1850 AD) was significantly cooler [18, 28]. Warmer intervals naturally correspond to rising sea levels, yet the *rate* of sea-level rise has remained essentially constant for roughly 140 years. In south Florida, where I live, marine shells discovered far inland offer further evidence of dramatic, millennial-scale variability in the eastern coastline of the United States² [19, 27, 36].

The postmodern deconstruction of language has also shaped contemporary climate discourse, particularly through the adoption of increasingly dramatic terminology. Winter storms are now named in a manner analogous to hurricanes; major systems are labeled “bomb cyclones.” Seasonal cold air masses in the northern United States are attributed to the “polar vortex.” Skeptics of prevailing climate narratives are frequently branded “climate deniers,” a term that carries moral and rhetorical weight. Al Gore—producer of *An Inconvenient Truth*, a 2006 documentary predicting numerous climate catastrophes by 2016, none of which occurred recently—delivered an impassioned speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos warning of “atmospheric rivers,” “rain bombs,” “boiling oceans,” and heat accumulation equivalent to “600,000 Hiroshima-class bombs every day” [11]. Amplifying such rhetoric is the now-constant, real-time reporting of weather disasters by meteorologists and storm chasers, who often risk their lives to deliver dramatic footage directly into viewers’ homes—a phenomenon unknown in previous generations.

Public figures such as Gore, Neil deGrasse Tyson, and Bill Nye frequently exaggerate or oversimplify these reports. [2] Their claims are then repeated in public-school classrooms, where teachers rely on textbooks written by authors who may possess only a superficial understanding of the underlying science. Alarmist theories are often presented as established fact. It is therefore unsurprising that many young people come to believe that human activity is irreparably destroying the planet [38, 39]. Roger Scruton captures the underlying logic of this apocalyptic narrative succinctly: “The curbing of human activity is the goal. We are the problem, and it is our intrusion into Eden that spelled disaster for the world” [37]. His observation highlights the moral framing that increasingly shapes environmental discourse—one that casts humanity not as steward but as antagonist, and that often substitutes fear for reasoned ethical reflection.

3. Our Longing for Paradise

“We are stardust. We are golden. And we’ve got to get ourselves back to the garden.” So declares the chorus of Joni Mitchell’s 1970 song *Woodstock*. The lyric captures a persistent

1 Dataset <https://doi.org/10.25919/5bfe29ff807fb> (Rubino et al., 2019 - Law Dome 2000-year CO₂, CH₄, N₂O record)

2 NOAA Global Mean Sea Level (GMSL) dataset:

<https://doi.org/10.7289/V5JQ0X3H>. NASA/NOAA Sea Level Change Data: https://doi.org/10.5067/GMSL_TP_JPL

human longing—one that raises the question of why the image of a garden exerts such enduring imaginative and spiritual power. C. S. Lewis, reflecting on this phenomenon in *Surprised by Joy*, observed that “our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off ... is not mere neurotic fantasy but the truest indication of our real situation.” Lewis’s insight suggests that humanity’s yearning for Eden is not sentimental escapism but a recognition of a profound metaphysical loss [16, 26].

Scripture affirms that this longing is not limited to humanity alone. When Paul writes that “all creation groans” (Romans 8:22), he refers to the cosmic consequences of the Fall—the curse to which the entire created order was subjected through the sin of Adam and Eve. Employing anthropomorphic language, Paul depicts the universe itself as crying out in anticipation, yearning for the day when the Edenic curse will be lifted and humanity will once again flourish as originally intended. “All creation” includes every human being, even those outside the Christian faith. They too bear the *imago Dei*, the image and likeness of God. Yet their longing is often misdirected. Augustine captures this misalignment succinctly: “We sin when, neglectful of order, we fix our love on the creature instead of on thee, the Creator” [1].

Timothy Keller expands this Augustinian insight by grounding human longing in the nature of God Himself when he explains that human beings bear the divine image, fashioned after the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From eternity, these three persons have existed in a mutual exchange of love, joy, and glory. Our own creation reflects this reality: we were made to participate in that joy by loving and glorifying God above all else. And because this orientation is built into our very nature, we continue to seek the infinite joy for which we were designed, even when we fail to recognize its source. Our longing for fulfillment is, at its core, a longing for restored communion with the Divine [21].

Keller’s formulation underscores that humanity’s desire for restoration—its yearning for the garden—is ultimately a desire for restored communion with God. Writing in *An Old Testament Theology*, Bruce Waltke explains that Paradise evokes a world free from pain and suffering, a realm where peace and love genuinely flourish. Across generations, human beings have longed for such a reality. This desire is woven into the fabric of our humanity: we are creatures who instinctively sense that the world as it currently exists is disordered, out of alignment with what it ought to be. Something in our shared consciousness insists that a better world, a better time, must be possible. This is why people continue to yearn for paradise. The Eden narrative resonates so deeply because it portrays a vision of flourishing that lies within humanity’s intended potential [41].

4. Eden Deferred: Living Faithfully Between the Fall and the Eschaton

This “universally compelling yearning for paradise,” as Waltke describes it, helps explain the motivational force be-

hind contemporary climate-change activism among both religious and non-religious advocates. (Here I distinguish benevolent climate-change proponents from those whose activism becomes anti-social, destructive of private property, ideologically anti-capitalist, or politically opportunistic—the so-called “climate hustlers.”) Although many activists are well-intentioned, including some evangelicals, their proposals are often misguided, particularly in light of how their recommended policies would affect the poor in the Developing World.

In 2006, the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI) published “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action” [10]. The document advanced four central claims: (1) human-induced climate change is real; (2) the consequences of climate change will be significant and will disproportionately harm the poor; (3) Christian moral conviction requires a response to the climate-change problem; and (4) immediate action is urgent.

Several months later, a group of scholars issued a counter-document, “A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming.” While commending the ECI for addressing an important ethical issue, the authors challenged its conclusions point by point. *A Call to Truth* argued that substantial natural variability in climate history remains poorly understood, rendering catastrophic computer-model projections speculative and therefore unsuitable as a basis for government policy. The document further contended that mandatory reductions in fossil-fuel use—particularly those required to achieve net-zero carbon emissions—would impose a “destructive impact on the poor ... far in excess of any impact, either positive or negative, of the moderate global warming that is most likely to occur.” Its authors stated that the economic harm produced by mandatory CO₂-reduction policies will almost certainly exceed any projected benefits, particularly for the poor, who bear the brunt of rising energy and commodity prices far more than the wealthy. For those living at the margins, even small increases in cost create significant hardship. In reality, the world’s poor are far better served by policies that promote economic growth and expand access to affordable energy than by the minimal reductions in future global warming that might result from restricting CO₂ emissions [4].

A Call to Truth concluded “that Christians must care about climate change because we love God and are called to love our neighbors and that God has given us stewardship over the earth.”

Scripture does not address climate change explicitly, yet it does affirm the stability and continuity of the created order: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22). Within the creation narrative, Adam is given the mandate to “subdue” the Earth and to exercise “dominion” over every living creature (Genesis 1:28). Although humanity was expelled from the garden, this mandate remains in effect. It is therefore incumbent upon Christians—out of love for God and neighbor—to be prepared to act for the good of others, regardless of climatological factors that may or may not contribute

to natural disasters. Christian responsibility is not contingent upon the accuracy of climate models; it is grounded in the enduring call to stewardship.

Five of the Ten Commandments provide a theological and ethical framework for articulating a Christian approach to Earth stewardship. The remainder of this paper will examine these commandments, explore their implications, and offer practical guidance for the church as it seeks to fulfill its vocation as caretaker of God's creation.

5. The First Commandment and the Rejection of Earth-Worship

In its narrow sense, the First Commandment expressly forbids the worship of any god other than the one true God. This prohibition necessarily includes the veneration of "Mother Nature" or Gaia, the Earth-deity of various contemporary spiritualities [40]. Such devotion constitutes a misdirection of worship. The Apostle Paul is explicit on this point: to worship the Earth is to "exchange the truth about God for a lie," and to serve "the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). Paul's critique is not merely theological but anthropological, identifying idolatry as a fundamental disordering of human love.

Timothy Keller, writing on the idolatry of power, offers a helpful framework for understanding how such misdirected devotion operates in the human heart. He explains that idolatry arises when created things—whether power, approval, wealth, or nature itself—are elevated to ultimate significance, displacing the Creator from His rightful place. Keller's analysis underscores that idolatry is not confined to ancient paganism; it is a perennial temptation for modern people, including those who elevate the natural world to an object of quasi-religious reverence. Keller explains that the first temptation in Eden centered on rejecting the limits God had established—"You shall not eat of the tree" (Genesis 2:17)—and grasping for autonomy, seeking to be "like God" by taking control of our own destiny. Humanity yielded to that temptation, and the impulse now resides deeply within us. Instead of embracing our finitude and our dependence on God, we continually search for ways to reassure ourselves that we retain mastery over our lives. Yet this sense of self-determined control is ultimately an illusion [22].

Keller's observation about the human desire for "power over our own lives" extends naturally to the modern impulse to control the weather. Although technological advances have enabled us to make indoor environments comfortable through heating and air conditioning, and although cloud-seeding has occasionally succeeded in coaxing rain from the sky, the notion of controlling weather systems remains, in Keller's terms, "an illusion." Efforts to do so illustrate both human ingenuity and human hubris. For example, Bill Gates proposed deploying barges in the ocean along the projected paths of hurricanes. These barges, for which Gates filed five patents in 2009,

would pump cold, deep-ocean water to the surface in an attempt to weaken the thermal engine that drives hurricane formation. More recently, Gates invested \$12 million in research aimed at reducing bovine eructation as a means of lowering methane emissions. Bjørn Lomborg—named one of TIME Magazine's 100 most influential people despite his extensive critique of climate-change misinformation—has suggested whitening clouds to increase their reflectivity and thereby reduce heat absorption. Even I have contributed to this imaginative impulse: in a work of climate fiction, I proposed a multinational effort to terraform the Sahara Desert to reduce the heat that contributes to Atlantic hurricane formation. Although the piece was explicitly fictional, more than one hundred readers responded with serious commentary, illustrating how compelling the idea of weather control remains [20, 30, 32, 35].

Yet Scripture is unequivocal: the governance of weather belongs to God alone (cf. Genesis 8:22; Psalms 147:8; 148:8; Job 5:10; 26:8-9; 37:1-18; Proverbs 3:19-20; Matthew 8:27). The biblical witness consistently portrays meteorological phenomena as expressions of divine sovereignty. Human beings may study weather, prepare for it, and mitigate its effects, but they cannot command it. We are not God.

In its broader and positive sense, the First Commandment therefore implies a responsibility to educate others about the one true God—in our churches, Christian schools, informal conversations, and most importantly, within our homes from the earliest ages. Children must be taught that the Earth is not divine but belongs to the Lord: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalms 24:1).

C. S. Lewis addresses this confusion between Creator and creation in *Reflections on the Psalms*: "What makes and what is made must be two not one. Thus, the doctrine of Creation in one sense empties Nature of divinity. But in another sense, the same doctrine which empties Nature of her divinity also makes her an index, a symbol, a manifestation of the Divine. It is surely just because the natural objects are no longer taken to be themselves Divine, that they can now be magnificent symbols of divinity [25].

Lewis's insight clarifies that nature's beauty and power point beyond themselves; they are not objects of worship but signs of the One worthy of worship [7]. John M. Frame reaches a similar conclusion when he explains that a biblical approach to environmental care rejects the pantheistic earth-spiritualities that inspire some non-Christian environmental movements. The earth is not divine, nor is it our mother or father. It is not an object of worship or a realm in which we seek mystical union. Instead, Scripture calls us to honor the earth as God's handiwork and to steward it in accordance with his purposes for the world [12].

Frame's formulation provides a succinct theological foundation for Christian environmental ethics: reverence for creation must never become reverence of creation.

6. Sabbath Theology and the Moral Reach of the Fourth Commandment

At first glance, it may seem unusual to associate the Fourth Commandment—"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"—with Earth stewardship. The narrow and widely accepted meaning of the commandment is that God's people are to set aside one day each week for rest from labor and for communal worship. Yet the commandment itself contains an additional theological rationale: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 20:11). The Sabbath command therefore grounds human rest in God's own creative pattern. It prescribes a day of consecration in which "all creation recognizes, affirms, and honors God's Lordship and behaves accordingly" [12].

Meredith G. Kline, writing in *Kingdom Prologue*, emphasizes the hierarchical structure embedded in the creation narrative: "All the creation of the six days is consecrated to man as the one set over all the works of God's hand, as the hierarchical structure of Genesis 1 shows, but man himself in turn is consecrated to the One who sets all things under his feet." Kline's formulation highlights the dual orientation of human vocation-toward creation in stewardship and toward God in worship. Frame develops this insight further, explaining that human beings participate in the Sabbath celebration of God's sovereign rule. On the seventh day, humanity is set apart to God, and as God's appointed vassal-king, the remainder of creation is entrusted to human care. In acknowledging God's lordship, we receive with gratitude the role he has given us-exercising delegated authority over the world and fulfilling the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 [12, 23].

In Frame's reading, Sabbath observance reinforces humanity's identity as God's appointed steward, entrusted with the care and cultivation of the created order. His mandate, originally given to Adam and Eve, extends beyond them to all humanity. As Richard B. Gaffin observes:

As God rested from his completed work of creation, so man would enter into his rest after completing his tasks as viceregent over creation (cf. Hebrews 4:10). This analogy between Creator and image-bearing creature involves an important difference. The creating work of God had been completed and his rest begun (cf. Hebrews 4:3-4). The task entrusted to Adam/man had yet to be performed; his rest was still future (cf. Hebrews 4:9) [13].

But there is still more we can learn from the Fourth Commandment. The Sabbath years mandated ecological responsibility." Frame explains that God's concern extends not only to people, animals, and vegetation but also to the land itself. Although the cultural mandate calls humanity to exercise dominion over the earth, that dominion is to mirror God's own-marked by benevolence rather than exploitation. Our task is not to abuse or exhaust the land but to preserve and care for it, a responsibility Scripture treats with great seriousness. This does not mean, as some forms of secular environmentalism

suggest, that the land must remain untouched or maintained in a pristine state. God has entrusted the earth to human beings for use and cultivation. Yet we are to engage with it wisely and responsibly, which in our context includes limiting pollution and managing the land in ways that bless future generations rather than burden them [12].

A final dimension of the Sabbath concerns its orientation toward the poor. In Exodus, the command to allow the land to "lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat" (Exodus 23:11) reveals that Sabbath observance is not merely about rest or worship; it is also an instrument of social justice. The Sabbath embeds within Israel's life a rhythm of mercy, ensuring that the vulnerable are not forgotten in the community's economic practices.

This concern resonates strongly with contemporary discussions of climate change. As Spencer, Driessen, and Beisner [3, 5,] observe, "Church leaders, evangelicals in particular, are concerned about climate change primarily because they fear its potential impact on the world's poor, especially in the tropics." Scripture consistently emphasizes God's care for the poor and His demand that His people act justly toward them. Any Christian ethic of Earth stewardship must therefore reckon with the disproportionate burdens that environmental policies may impose on impoverished populations, particularly in the Developing World.

We will explore this theme further in our discussion of the Eighth Commandment, where issues of stewardship, justice, and the moral implications of environmental policy come into sharper focus.

7. Honor, Authority, and Stewardship: The Fifth Commandment's Broader Reach

The Fifth Commandment's mandate to honor father and mother extends far beyond the nuclear family to encompass all legitimate authority structures. As John Frame observes:

The metaphoric use of "father" and "mother" extends the Fifth Commandment far beyond the family, reaching into the many spheres of society and the diverse authority structures that sustain them. Every legitimate authority, in its own way, bears obligations analogous to those of children toward their parents. Faithfulness within these relationships-marked by honor, respect, and obedience-carries with it the promise of long life and prosperity, a blessing Scripture attaches to rightly ordered authority and rightly ordered response. [12].

The commandment thus establishes a moral architecture for social order, one that links respect for authority with human flourishing.

There are important conceptual linkages between the Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Commandments and their implications for Earth stewardship. Long life, prosperity, and compassion for the poor require an ordered and just society in which authority is exercised responsibly and honored appropriately. A stable

social hierarchy-rooted in mutual respect between those who govern and those who are governed-is essential for the wise use of natural resources, the protection of human life, and the equitable distribution of the Earth's goods. These ethical commitments form the backbone of any Christian approach to environmental responsibility.

Yet Scripture is equally clear that humanity's sinful nature frustrates its best efforts to construct a global utopia. The longing for a perfectly ordered world will remain unfulfilled until the Lord returns and inaugurates "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21). In the present age, our responsibility is more modest but no less urgent: we are called to exercise thoughtful stewardship over the resources God has entrusted to us and to educate others-within the church and beyond-about humanity's vocation as caretaker of creation. This includes, centrally, the proclamation of the gospel, which alone can reorder human loves and restore proper relationships between God, humanity, and the created order. Frame writes that after the fall, rational stewardship of the earth's resources becomes profoundly difficult, because sinful human beings and nations often pursue their own advantage at the expense of others. A genuinely balanced environmental policy would require a level of cooperation that, in the present age, seems unattainable. Even scientific discussions are frequently shaped by ideological commitments, making it hard to establish a shared foundation of trusted research. Without scientific work that commands broad confidence, determining the best course of action for environmental preservation becomes exceedingly challenging. Frame argues that only a regenerate society-one united by a common worldview-could achieve the agreement necessary to care for the earth effectively. Thus, he concludes that the environment's most urgent need is evangelism [12].

Christians must be known not only for what they oppose-including the politicization of science in service of climate-change policy-but also for what they affirm. A faithful Christian witness requires supporting efforts that preserve the Earth's natural beauty, protect ecosystems, and promote the wise and sustainable use of natural resources, all while ensuring that such efforts do not harm the poor. Climate-change skepticism, properly understood, is not an excuse for inactivity. It is instead a call for discernment: a refusal to embrace policies that are either scientifically unfounded or ethically detrimental, coupled with a commitment to responsible stewardship grounded in Scripture.

Christian environmental ethics must therefore hold together two convictions: first, that human beings are called to exercise dominion with wisdom, restraint, and gratitude; and second, that environmental policies must be evaluated in light of their consequences for the vulnerable. The church's task is not to retreat from environmental engagement but to participate in it thoughtfully, resisting ideological excess while promoting practices that honor God's creation and protect those most likely to suffer from misguided or coercive climate initiatives.

This balanced posture prepares the way for the ethical considerations embedded in the Sixth Commandment, where the

protection of life becomes a central concern for Christian stewardship of the Earth. Frame explains that God's particular care for human life does not exclude his concern for the rest of creation; his regard extends analogously to all living things and even to the land itself. Although humanity is appointed to exercise dominion over the earth, we do so as creatures fashioned from dust and dependent on the created order for our very survival. We are therefore called to use the earth's resources without exploiting or exhausting them. When those resources are depleted, human beings inevitably suffer the consequences. Responsible stewardship is essential not only for the earth's well-being but for our own. Humanity cannot fulfill the mandate to "fill and subdue" the earth if it destroys the very resources that make such flourishing possible. Our welfare and the welfare of creation are inseparably linked [12].

Where reasonable, Christians should support environmental policies that manage the Earth's natural resources intelligently and sustainably, provided such policies do not inflict economic harm on vulnerable populations. As Paul Harris observes, "I acknowledge that many of the solutions to climate change must involve states. However, this reality need not absolve capable individuals from explicit responsibility and obligation" [15]. His point underscores a central feature of Christian environmental ethics: responsibility is both corporate and personal. Governments may enact policies, but individuals-especially those with influence, expertise, or resources-retain moral agency.

Christian stewardship therefore requires a balanced posture. On the one hand, believers must resist policies that are scientifically dubious, economically destructive, or disproportionately harmful to the poor. On the other hand, they must not retreat into passivity or indifference. The call to stewardship is rooted in Scripture, not in political ideology. It obligates Christians to engage thoughtfully with environmental concerns, to advocate for policies that promote human flourishing, and to model responsible care for creation in their own lives.

This dual commitment-skepticism toward harmful policies and support for prudent, just, and sustainable practices-forms a bridge to the ethical considerations embedded in the Sixth Commandment, where the protection of human life becomes a central concern for environmental responsibility.

8. The Moral Demands of Life and Stewardship in the Sixth and Eighth Commandments

Why should a woman living in sub-Saharan Africa be consigned to an existence in which she must gather wood or dung for fuel when her life could be immeasurably improved through increased wealth and economic development? The Sixth Commandment explicitly prohibits murder, but in its broader moral scope it commands the preservation and enhancement of human life. This includes not only the protection of life itself but also the promotion of conditions in which hu-

man beings may flourish. In this way, the Sixth Commandment stands in close ethical proximity to the Eighth Commandment, whose broader implications concern wealth, poverty, and the just use of material resources.

When applied to environmental policy, this moral framework demands careful discernment. As Spencer, Driessen, and Beisner argue, “It is immoral and harmful to the earth’s poorest citizens to deny them the benefits of abundant, reliable, affordable electricity and other forms of energy (for homes, cars, airplanes, and factories) merely because it is produced by using fossil fuels” [3, 5]. Their point is not a rejection of environmental responsibility but a reminder that policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions must not impose disproportionate burdens on the world’s most vulnerable populations.

Christian ethics therefore requires a balanced approach: one that affirms the goodness of creation and the importance of responsible stewardship, yet refuses to endorse policies that hinder economic development, exacerbate poverty, or diminish human well-being. The call to protect life-embedded in the Sixth Commandment-extends to ensuring that environmental initiatives do not unintentionally harm those who are already most at risk.

Stopping or reversing economic development in the world’s poor countries-which drastic restrictions on fossil fuel use would cause or keep poor nations impoverished. It would perpetuate what South Africa’s Leon Louw calls “human game preserves,” where Western tourists can see “cute, indigenous people at one with their environment and the wildlife.” One must ask whether any climate activist-or any signer of *Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action*-would willingly spend even a single month living in the conditions their policy recommendations would effectively preserve for many in rural, malaria-ridden regions of sub-Saharan Africa. Who among them would choose to inhabit a mud hut, drink contaminated water, subsist on meager, mold-tainted food, inhale smoke from wood and dung fires, and live year-round without electricity, refrigeration, air-conditioning, or basic lighting? [3, 5].

Americans are among the wealthiest people in the world. It follows, then, that the American church bears a particular responsibility to support-generously and sacrificially-those ministries and organizations laboring to alleviate poverty. Paul exhorts believers in Galatians 6:10: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” The abundance God has entrusted to his people in this nation should therefore be stewarded for the good of the poor, both within the church and beyond it, as an expression of Christian love and obedience.

9. Bringing the Three Perspectives Together in Christian Stewardship

Christians must adopt a biblically grounded framework for

Earth stewardship, one that is properly triperspectival-existential, deontological, and teleological. The evangelical community should be recognized not merely for its critiques of misguided environmental policies or the politicization of science, but for its genuine love of creation and its commitment to responsible care for the world God has made. Existentially, the church is called to inhabit creation in a manner befitting its identity as God’s redeemed people, living in harmony with the Earth and with one another as stewards of a divinely entrusted domain.

Yet this stewardship must be exercised with discernment. Christians should embrace creation care with the sober recognition that certain policy proposals, though well-intentioned or politically fashionable, may produce harmful consequences-particularly when adopted under the false assumption that immediate action is always necessary. Proverbs 22:3 commends prudence as the ability to foresee danger and avoid it. As Spencer, Driessen, and Beisner observe, “Wise and effective foresight and avoidance of risk is a biblical virtue. It would behoove Christians who want to make a positive contribution to environmental risk assessment and reduction to learn effective ways to do it” [3, 5]. Responsible stewardship therefore requires both affection for creation and a careful evaluation of environmental policies in light of their long-term effects.

Deontologically, the church bears an obligation to assist those affected by weather-related disasters, especially the poor. This duty may be fulfilled through direct volunteer service or through financial support of organizations such as Samaritan’s Purse, the American Red Cross, and other para-church ministries. Southern Baptist congregations, for example, may partner with the North American Mission Board (NAMB), which frequently coordinates disaster-relief operations. Such acts of mercy embody the church’s covenantal responsibility to love its neighbor and uphold the dignity of human life.

Frame offers numerous practical suggestions in his discussion of the Eighth Commandment and its broader implications for wealth, poverty, and the just use of creation’s resources. These insights further illuminate how a triperspectival ethic can guide the church’s engagement with environmental concerns. He suggests that the church must take primary responsibility for caring for those suffering in the midst of famine and natural disasters. Christians should be at the forefront of serving the “poorest of the poor,” those who have nowhere else to turn. Our mercy ministries should be centered on the gospel and should not only meet immediate physical needs but also equip people with academic skills, vocational training, and more effective agricultural practices. We should establish communities in the world’s most impoverished regions to demonstrate tangibly how Christ transforms family life and church life. And we should advocate for governmental policies that enable poorer nations to trade and compete fairly with wealthier ones [12].

The church bears a divinely mandated responsibility to

“open its mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute,” and to “judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9). This obligation includes educating its members in a distinctly Christian ethic of environmental stewardship—one that honors the goodness of creation while avoiding policies that inadvertently harm the world’s poor. Such instruction may take modest forms, such as leading small-group studies on creation care, or more demanding forms, such as contributing essays to Christian publications, participating in environmental think-tanks, or crafting op-eds and letters to local newspapers.

Not every believer possesses the gifts, calling, or social position necessary for public engagement of this sort, and I do not advocate a “Christian culturalist” model that presumes universal participation. Nevertheless, as Frame rightly observes, “Christians should seek to influence the world for Christ in some way; that is the Great Commission” [12]. Influence need not be dramatic, but it must be faithful.

Avoiding the political dimensions of climate change is admittedly difficult. The contemporary discourse surrounding environmental policy has become so polarized and rhetorically charged that dissent from the alleged consensus often invites social censure or cancellation—an experience I know firsthand [14]. Yet this reality does not absolve Christians of the responsibility to speak prudently and courageously.

Despite the prevailing consensus, those of us living in the modern, economically developed West must be prepared to defend sound climate policies—policies that place human well-being, especially that of the poor, at the forefront. Environmental stewardship cannot be severed from economic and humanitarian considerations.

Deepak Lal offers a sobering reminder in “Poverty and Progress: Realities and Myths about Global Poverty,” underscoring the moral gravity of policies that impede development or exacerbate poverty. His analysis reinforces the central claim of this paper: Christian environmental ethics must be guided not only by love for creation but also by a rigorous commitment to human flourishing, particularly among the world’s most vulnerable. The most significant obstacle to reducing the deep, structural poverty of the developing world is the ongoing effort by Western governments—often encouraged by certain climate scientists and environmental activists—to restrict greenhouse-gas emissions, especially CO₂ from fossil-fuel use. Lal argues that it was precisely humanity’s ability to harness the mineral energy stored in fossil fuels, together with the gradual unfolding of the Industrial Revolution, that enabled societies to rise out of the persistent poverty that had marked human history for millennia. Imposing limits on fossil-fuel consumption without providing economically viable alternatives would effectively consign the Third World to continued, entrenched poverty [24].

Additional practical expressions of Christian stewardship may include sponsoring environmentally responsible initiatives within the local church—such as hosting a workshop built around an evangelical resource like *Climate Change* and the

Christian; organizing or participating in beach or park clean-ups; volunteering at a local zoo; planting trees with neighbors on Arbor Day; or contributing financially to Plant with Purpose, a Christian organization that operates “at the intersection of poverty alleviation, environmental restoration, and spiritual renewal.” Individual believers may also adopt modest practices such as recycling cans, bottles, and paper; driving more fuel-efficient vehicles (with appropriate caution regarding the economic and ethical complexities of electric vehicles and the sourcing of battery components; or utilizing public transportation and carpooling [6, 31, 34].

Although some of these actions may appear minor, they contribute to a credible Christian witness, embody love of neighbor, and may create opportunities for gospel conversations—demonstrating the outward justification of faith through works (James 2:24). At a minimum, such practices exemplify responsible citizenship. More importantly, they enact the moral law expressed in the Ten Commandments and give tangible expression to the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28.

If we affirm that the gospel transforms all of life, then obedience to the Great Commission becomes the most effective means of cultural renewal. As individuals are converted and discipled, they are increasingly disposed to fulfill the cultural mandate, becoming faithful stewards of God’s creation. As John Frame observes:

The gospel is not merely a message addressed to individuals, instructing them how to escape divine wrath. It is the proclamation of a kingdom—a renewed society, a redeemed community, a restored covenant people, a reconstituted family, a holy nation, and therefore an altogether new culture. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) charges the church not only to announce the gospel and administer baptism, but also to teach disciples to obey *all* that Christ has commanded. Its scope is comprehensive. The gospel forms a new kind of people whose allegiance to Christ extends into every dimension of life. Such people inevitably reshape the world; they “fill and rule” the earth for the glory of Jesus [12].

In fulfilling the Great Commission, we “keep his commandments,” thereby demonstrating our love for God (John 14:15) and for our neighbor. This is a worthy *telos*. More than that, it is the pursuit of the *summum bonum*—the highest good—by giving glory to God for his creation and participating in his redemptive purposes for the world.

Abbreviations

ECI Evangelical Climate Initiative

Author Contributions

Gregory John Rummo: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Re-

sources, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

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The data supporting the outcome of this research work has been reported in this manuscript.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Biography



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