2010

FAITH BASED ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ON VIRGINIA’S NORTHERN NECK AND EASTERN SHORE

Paoula Sehannie
Virginia Commonwealth University

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FAITH BASED ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP:
PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ON
VIRGINIA’S NORTHERN NECK AND EASTERN SHORE

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Director: Dr. Deirdre M. Condit
Distinguished Professor, Public Policy and Education
Former Dean, School of Education
Executive Director, Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

By
Paoula Sehannie

Virginia Commonwealth University

Richmond, Virginia

December 2010
Acknowledgement

To My Family

Doctor Paoula Sehannie, who would have imagined it? It has been a long trip and none of it would have been possible without you. In keeping with the Sehannie nature I will keep this brief; you are the best. To my sister Lisa thanks for just being my crazy sister. This achievement belongs as much to my family as it does to me.

Dr Cliff Fox and Dr Deirdre Condit

I will thank you both together because you are equally responsible for my success in reaching this point. Dr Fox, thank you for your years of support and for believing in me and my ideas. Thank you for being the voice of reason and reining me in, but also for letting me wander and explore and learn. This has been a long process and I could not have navigated it without your guidance, patience and support. To Dr Condit: thank you also for your help and support on this dissertation. But thank you also for your years as a mentor. You have been for me a model of intelligence, strength and compassion.

My Committee, Drs Helen Ruth Aspaas and Greg Garman

Thank you both for joining this project fairly late in the process. I am grateful for your willingness to take on this task and for the thoughtful insights and contributions you made to my work.
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ABSTRACT:

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the relationship between religion and the environment. The purpose of this project is to explore the environmental practices and attitudes of Christian churches in two Virginia Communities. The two communities; the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore are located on the Chesapeake Bay and have a shared history of dependence on the Bay. The results of the dissertation demonstrate the prevalence of environmental programs in the population, the nature of these programs and the respondents’ attitudes towards a host of environmental issues. These results can be used by environmental professionals and policy makers seeking to form partnerships with the religious community and hence promote sustainability within religious institutions and their followers. It will also prove useful to religious organizations which are concerned with environmental issues.
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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement and Abstract:
In 1967, Lynn White presented the argument that human treatment, and specifically abuse, of the environment was tied to western Christian traditions. White proposed that religious beliefs shaped how we view the world and our role in that world. White ultimately concluded and the anthropocentrism that Christianity rooted therein “bears a huge burden of guilt” for the environmental crisis. He also argued that since the roots of the problem were “largely religious” the “remedy must also be essentially religious” (White, 1967).

While it may be argued that it was White who woke the Christian theological community to ecology and Christianity’s role (Gottlieb, 2004, no page), White was not the first to make the connection between religion and the environment. Hargrove (1986) points out that religion has in fact long been a part of the environmental movement. He notes a number of iconic environmentalists, including Emerson, Thoreau, and John Muir, whose writings all incorporate religion dimensions (viii). Hargrove argues that Aldo Leopold’s The Land Ethic, which is largely read as a call for philosophy to play a part in environmental issues, is equally a call to the religious community.
Leopold, considered the “father of environmental ethics” was equally concerned with religion in the environmental movement, as he was with philosophy. As Hargrove points out, Leopold explicitly noted the role of both philosophy and religion; “No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions. The proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it” (viii). His arguments were similar to White’s if a little less explicit in criticizing Christianity. Leopold declared, "Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land" (Albanese, 1997, 26).

To these earlier faith-based advocates we must add the voice of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Albanese (1997) argues that what is needed to solve the environmental crisis is not a political model, but a religious one. This model “harks back to the Transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson” (21). She further offers that Emerson “is an almost wholly overlooked resource for present-day environmentalist conversation” (30). She points out that commentators, for example Nash, explore Thoreau’s contribution, but do not address Emerson. In this she seems correct; reading the literature, there is little mention of Emerson. Her points are especially significant in the context of this study, given her conclusion that, “Emerson clearly articulates a religious model for environmentalism and one tied to ethical directives that are eminently practicable” (30).

Emerson is an interesting model for faith-based stewardship. It is perhaps, little acknowledged that he was a descendent of eight generations of ministers. He was a
graduate of the Harvard Divinity School and held a Unitarian pastorate in Boston (Albanese, 31). Albanese suggest that there are “religious ramifications” of the Transcendental Club, of which Emerson was the “acknowledged leader” (31).

Despite these earlier discussions, it seems to be White’s essay that gained the most traction and that has shaped the debate. I think that there are a number of reasons for this. The first reason might be related to the way White framed the question. While Muir and Leopold saw a role for religion in the environmental movement – as did White – it was White who laid blame. And as I shall discuss, this has caused a slew of negative responses. Some, for example Hargrove (1986) regret the writing of the article.

There is another reason, I would suggest that Lynn White’s article took hold. I believe that Lynn White wrote an article that touched on timely issues, perhaps it was as Hugo said, an idea whose time had come. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* was written several years prior, the first Earth Day followed a few short years later. The Love Canal incident became prominent in the news around the same time that White published his article, as did the burning Cuyahoga River. It is in the late 1960s and 1970s that the environmental movement was born. And so, I believe that White’s article garners the attention it did (and still does) because it touched on a subject that was gaining widespread attention.

Several decades after *The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis*, we still find a lively debate on faith-based environmentalism. Guth et al (1995) second Gottlieb’s assertions, proposing that there is a “fervent debate in religious circles” over environmental issues (365). Guth et al present several examples of theologians and
religous leaders who have “embraced ‘environmental spirituality’”, but acknowledge that others have “virtually ignored or even rejected environmental concerns” (365).

Despite this growth in religious debate there remains much that is unknown or unexplored. Tucker and Williams (1997) note that many questions remain answered with regard to religion and nature. Despite growing scholarly attention to religion’s role in the environmental crisis, “we still have not exhausted all the reasons for religion’s lack of attention to the environmental crisis” and these reasons “require further exploration and explanation” (xx).

More germane to this study, Fowler (1995), for example, states that too little is known about environmentalism within local churches (23). Fowler was referring to Protestant denominations, but I think that the point holds true for Catholic churches. Guth, et al (1995) similarly note a robust relationship between church leadership and the environmental movement (264), particularly within Protestant dominations. Yet, “whether laity have been engaged is more questionable” (265). This is particularly surprising, Guth et al argue, given the lively debate that exists within the religious community on the question of faith and the environment (365). And while there may be curiosity among scholars and journalists about the growing faith-based environmental movement, “there has been no comparable boom in survey research” (366).

Given White’s arguments and these subsequent observations, I will propose that there is in fact a growing faith-based environmental movement. Despite the vast body of literature on the subject, there is much that we do not know. Specifically, as Fowler and Guth note, there is a dearth of knowledge on what is occurring in local churches. I share White’s opinion that the western religions have a role to play in the environmental
movement, a movement that has heretofore been considered a largely secular movement. Thus, I wish to explore the issue of local church participation in the environmental movement.

Further, little is known about how a local church’s social embeddedness affects its environmental attitudes and activities, though there is some evidence to suggest that the prevailing views on the environmental will affect a church’s participation in environmental activities. For example Clinebell (1970) and Greenberg (2000) both address the disconnect that sometimes exists between clergy and congregation. In implementing social projects, the clergy must be sensitive to these ideological differences.

Another component in this question of embeddedness is the relationship with the surrounding community. I have chosen for my population two rural communities located on opposite banks of the Chesapeake Bay. Djupe and Gilbert (2002) found that in churches that are isolated from their surrounding communities, clergy tend to engage more frequently in public speech (604). And “churches judged to be unlike their surroundings communities were quite likely to be located in urban areas” (604). Given these findings we would expect to find that churches found in rural areas and highly connected to the community would be less vocal on issues not important to the local community.

I have selected to focus my study on the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore of Virginia, two rural areas with long standing ties to the Chesapeake Bay. I will introduce both areas later in this study, so for now, I will tender a few more words on my decision to study them.
My interest in faith-based stewardship is, as Scheffler (2002) stated about her own work, based on the belief that environment protection is a “worthwhile societal goal” (60). And much like Scheffler, who spent time working in the Bay watershed and became interested in the resource issues relating to the Bay, I too am interested in the health of the Bay. Finally, once again echoing Scheffler, “I did not address this issue as a means of promoting religious solutions to conservation problems” (60). But I believe that religion is an important social mechanism with which to affect positive environmental outcomes. And as an environmental policy scholar, I am interested in “understanding and incorporating participants’ values into any problem-solving process” (60).

More specifically, I was influenced by the work of Susan Drake Emmerich (2001) with the Tangier watermen. Her work with the watermen was pivotal in creating a faith-based stewardship program with the watermen and it piqued my curiosity. I was interested to know whether similar programs have emerged in the area since she completed her study. And while she limited her work to Tangier Island, I was curious whether geographic and social differences would affect the emergence of similar programs.

My choice of the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore communities owes to their location on and ties to the Chesapeake Bay. Both the Eastern Shore and Northern Neck are dependent on the good health of the Bay, as I will discuss in the chapter dedicated to each location. Here it will suffice to say that given their close ties to the Bay one would expect a deeper awareness of its troubles and perhaps a commitment to address these problems. While I have not focused solely on the Chesapeake Bay, it will be
interesting to see whether it figures more prominently in environmental activities. As Moran (2006) notes, our current environmental crisis is global, which we are struggling to comprehend (1). And while our actions and impacts are now spread across the globe, we still think, as a species, in local terms (2).

But there are some subtle differences. It is for these differences that I include both communities in this study. The Northern Neck has seen an influx of retirees, while the Eastern Shore (ES) remains largely an agriculture and fishing community. Further, the ES is somewhat more isolated from the rest of the state. I was interested to see whether differences in faith-based activities would exist between the two populations.

The specific question I asked: **Does the Social Embeddedness of Rural Churches Influence Their Environmental Attitudes and Activities? A Comparative Analysis of the Attitude and Practices of Christian Churches on the Eastern Shore and Northern Neck of Virginia.**

My research is guided by three main themes:

i) what are the arguments for religious involvement in solving the environmental crisis?

ii) what are the attitudes of local clergy on the role of the church in the environment movement? And

iii) what, if anything, are the Christian churches in two rural Virginia communities doing to address environmental concerns within their congregations?

I will begin with an introduction to the broad subject matter of my study. In Chapter II I present a review of the literature. This will include an examination of Lynn White’s arguments and the responses to it. I will present a discussion on the many
assets the religious community might bring to the environmental movement. I will also explore the larger question of the church in political activism. Finally, I will provide a look at various examples of how Christianity is applying the idea of eco-theology.

Following this will be the chapters dealing with my own primary research. Chapter III will detail the research design and methods. To better understand the two areas I am studying I have dedicated a chapter to each. Thus, Chapter IV will be dedicated to the Northern Neck and Chapter V to the Eastern Shore. In Chapter VI I will present the finding and analysis of the data. Finally, in Chapter V, I discuss the results and the implications to Environmental Policy.

**Terminology:**

Before delving into the relevant literature, it is important to clarify some terminology that appears throughout this work.

**Environmental Ethics –**

Environmental ethics will be used extensively throughout this work. Nash (1989) explains this as the idea “that morality ought to include the relationship of humans to nature” and furthermore that ethics should be expanded to include considerations of not only humans, but of all creation (4).

Hargrove’s (1986) is a fine explanation of environmental ethics. He explains that until the 1970s environmental ethics did not exist in the lexicon of philosophers (ix). In more recent years, as philosophy has become a more applied discipline, questions of environmental ethics have been raised. Thus, environmental ethics can be described as
an applied philosophic, as opposed to “pure philosophy” approach (ix). This is particularly relevant to this research, given that I am concerned with how environmentalism is being practiced in local churches. Much is known on the theological aspects of faith and nature, but there is much to learn on how these theories are being applied in local congregations.

**Eco-theology —**

Eco-theology “seeks a comprehensive way to think about the sacredness of the earth and the fairness of our social relationships, about the fate of our oceans and the living conditions of the poor, about the world we want for our grandchildren and the destructive consequences of domination and exploitation” (Gottleib, 2006, 19).

Environmental philosophy, the works of John Locke for example, have also been labeled eco-theology (Nash, 88). I, however, differentiate environmental ethics from eco-theology and other explicitly religious terminology – such as creation care and religious stewardship. While our morals and ethics are often shaped by religion, I would argue that is not necessarily the case, particularly with regards to the environment. Consider, for example, the so-called secular environment movement, which can be considered to follow environmental ethics, but is not religiously driven. Given this distinction I will not use eco-theology in the same context as environmental ethics. Rather I understand it as more explicitly religious and more appropriately understood with the following terms.
Creation Care –

According to the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) their approach to the environment is one based on the Bible (Evangelical Environmental Network). Creation care teaches that nature and humanity are part of God’s creation. Humanity and nature are thus intricately linked. Ultimately, creation care is not care for nature or humanity it is care for both. According to EEN creation care based on the Bible is “a holistic ethic” (Evangelical Environmental Network).

Creation care is commonly associated with the evangelical movement, but any number of similar terms apply to the Christian environmental movement in general. As already mentioned, eco-theology is another holistic approach to the environment, based on religious teachings. Faith-based stewardship or faith based environmentalism may be substituted.

These various terms, *creation care, eco-theology, religious/faith-based stewardship and religious/faith-based environmentalism*, will be used interchangeably. Each is understood to imply a form of environmentalism that is driven by one’s faith and based on biblical teachings.

Social Embeddedness –

Edmonds (1999) describes social embeddedness as “the extent to which modeling the behavior of an agent requires the inclusion of the society of agents as a whole” (323). Thus social embeddedness considers the ways in which the social situation can affect the actions of an agent (323). In the case of this study the agent is
the church in question and it is hypothesized that each church will be embedded in its community.

Embeddedness can be considered from both a sociology perspective and a cognitive science view. I think that for the purposes of this study the sociologist view is most relevant. Thus I will accept the sociologist view that “relevant agents are ultimately embedded in their society – phenomena are described at the social level and their impact on individual behavior” will be considered (324).

Let us now move onto the Lynn White effect. What exactly was White’s thesis? Was it an accurate portrayal? And what have been the consequences of that article? I now move into a review of the literature where I will explore these and other questions.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

Referring to White’s article, Ferre (1986) notes that the issues are “more tangled than White’s early spadework could have been expected to uncover” (2). He is not alone in this conclusion. Diamond (2005) illustrates the point using a Buddhist example. He notes the environmental successes of the Middle and Late Tokugawa Japanese. But he dismisses the theory that this stewardship was religiously driven. The supposed love of nature and Buddhist respect for life, he argues are too simplistic, further arguing that these beliefs did not prevent Early Tokugawa Japan from abusing resources. Nor have these ideals prevented modern Japan from depleting its resources (304). Thus, even within cultures that preach respect for nature we find environmental abuse and neglect. Diamond, therefore concludes that these simple arguments are not accurate enough descriptors of a complex reality (304).

More recent research further highlights the complexity of the subject. Duke researchers state that while environmental issues are important, it seems that these are issues that “the Christian community hasn't really addressed very energetically” (Basgall, 2002, no page). Yet, they acknowledge that there is not unanimous support or lack thereof, even within denominations. The conclusion is that "you can't say that everyone in the Methodist Church espouses environmental convictions because the UMC says it in their bulletin". And I suggest local differences will affect the activities of any given church. Citing the Duke study, "a church in Nebraska is very different from a church in Florida, demographically and culturally” (Basgall, 2002, no page).

Numerous others have weighed in, often with contradictory points of view.
Hargrove (1986) claims that White’s thesis was essentially correct and as a result could not be decisively contested (vxi). Gottlieb (2004) however, states, religions have been neither “simple agents of environmental domination” nor “unmixed repositories of ecological wisdom” (9). What then is the answer? I will use this literature review to examine the arguments for and against White’s thesis. Furthermore, I will examine the outcomes of White’s article.

Using the literature, which grew from White’s article, I will examine religion and the environment in four subject areas. I begin with an examination White’s thesis and the merits and demerits thereof. I then discuss the importance of involving the religious community in the environmental movement. These reasons are both practical and ideological. I follow that with a review, beyond the environmental context, of how the church has contributed to past social movements. Finally, I look at where the religious community stands on the environmental crisis at this moment. It will include an analysis of the church governing bodies, theologians and academics, partnerships between secular and environmental groups and finally the activities in local churches.

The literature review will thus proceed as follows:

- The Roots of the Ecological Crisis,
- The “Business of Character Cultivation”,
- The Church as Agent of Social Change,
- A Shift in Thinking.

I hope to highlight four issues in this literature review: First, there is not consensus on what the relationship of religion to nature is, or has been. Some argue, as Lynn White did, that the religion, and specifically the Judeo-Christian tradition, has
some burden to bear in this crisis. Others contend that scripture provides lessons for the protection of nature. Still others suggest that the answer is not an either/or proposition, that evidence hints religion has been both good to and bad for the environment. As Paul Santmire argued,

> Christian thought is both promising and not promising for those who are seeking to find solid traditional foundations for a new theology of nature.

> Which historical tendencies within the tradition are promising and which are not, moreover, is by no means self-evident.

(Randolph & Yunt, 2010, no page).

Secondly, whatever the accuracy of White’s article, it has sparked a discussion within the religious community. We have subsequently seen, and continue to see, a growth of literature on the subject of religion and nature. The multitude of authors presented in this brief introduction is evidence of that. As Gottlieb (1996) notes in the his compilation on the roots of the environmental crisis, “there has been explosive growth in scholarship, institutional commitment and public action embodying connection between religion and environmentalism” (17 – 18). While the various authors make, in some cases, competing claims the profusion of writings on the subject at least suggests that the religious community is paying attention to the environmental crisis. Furthermore, many religious leaders and institutions have begun to question what their role has been and what it should be.

I will also address the historical precedent for religious institutions to act as an agent of social change. If one accepts, as I will throughout this work, that the environmental crisis requires more than technical and scientific solutions, then
Christianity has an important role to play. Finally, the focus of this work is environmental stewardship in local churches. It is therefore, important to investigate to what degree faith-based stewardship has moved beyond the church leaders and into local congregations. Whether it has become to any degree a popular movement within the religious community.

As I work through the literature, I will discuss my interpretations on the various arguments that I present. Let me begin by offering a few words on my impression on the Lynn White debate and faith-based stewardship in general. I think that probably for many years religious people and institutions paid little mind to the environment. I would probably agree that the schisms present in Christianity suggested human superiority. Yet, I would argue that this was also true of society as a whole. At the time of White’s writing little thought was given to the environment and our impact thereon.

Hill (1998) cites Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold as some of the earliest environmentalists. Carson published her seminal work in 1962. In the 1970s, Wendell Berry was influential in the environmental movement. But it was not until the 1980s, posits Hill, that the movement truly got underway (2). Similarly, the religious environmental movement is “of a recent vintage” (Hill, 2). As others have noted, Hill cites White’s article as provoking “an avalanche of reaction”.

It must be noted of course that even through these lean environmental years a few ecological voices could be heard. So you have the case of Saint Francis in the religious context and the Rachel Carsons in the so-called secular movement. These few examples notwithstanding, I would suggest that the environment was low on most people’s agendas, both religious and not.
It is also probably true that most people, religious and otherwise, considered that the resources of the earth were theirs for the taking. This was almost certainly reinforced by religious notions of dominion and the supremacy of humans over nature. But it was also encouraged by a culture consumed with consuming. The economic arguments must not be neglected in this argument. Is Christianity in fact to blame for the environmental crisis? Probably there is some truth to the argument. It should be acknowledged that the major western, industrial countries are largely Christian and this connection between industrialism, religion and environmental degradation cannot be ignored.

On a related note, Gross (1997) concludes that religious traditions have historically not focused on an environmental ethic (334). In this she includes traditions typically associated with strong environmental positions. Specifically she names Buddhism and indigenous religions. She argues that for a tradition to be considered environmentally engaged it must encourage people to consume less when technology enables them to consume more (335).

She therefore asserts that true environmental ethics, as opposed to mere rhetoric are defined, as “making a choice against excessive…consumption rather than being a byproduct of technological limitations” (335). Thus, no religion can be considered to have a true environmental ethic, because hitherto environmentalism was limited by technology, not by choice. She does not despair however.

In the years since White’s article was published there has been a flood of responses, one tactic has been to cite the various passages in the Bible that call for protection of the environment. On this count, I would say that it is likely that an equal
amount of examples can be found to demonstrate that Christianity is in fact anti-nature or at least supports the notion that nature is here for our use. The important point, I think, is not so much what the Bible says, but how people have chosen to use it. As Phillips (2006) wryly notes, when scripture has failed or proven erroneous, people have simply “opened their Bibles to different passages” (144).

I further believe that religious people and institutions have been guilty of environmental abuse, whether implicitly or explicitly. While the religious community might have been slow to join the environmental cause, it should not be ignored that there have been hints of environmentalism in the Christian tradition. It will also be shown that the environmental community has long been skeptical of religious groups and people. Whether justified or not this created friction between the two groups and has made co-operation difficult.

I will return to each of these issues as I proceed through the literature. But I think that Jensen (2006) encapsulates the issues. While many authors address one piece of the puzzle, Jensen, to my mind, ties them all together. While his concern is not specifically with religion, Jensen (2006) does address the role the religion has played and might play in the environmental movement. His criticisms are primarily directed at civilization and the various institutions, of which it comprises. Religion being just one.

He proffers that one of the “myths” of our culture is the allure of growth and consumption. And in this, he says religion is complicit and has been since the birth of religion. This philosophy was “was manifest from the beginning” (118). The beginning he points to is the Genesis command to subdue nature. And while he holds religion accountable it is not only religion he feels is guilty.
Jensen’s criticisms are directed at religion, capitalism and science and he concludes that together the various elements of culture conspire to destroy the environment. Not one is entirely responsible, none are innocent. He argues that science and capitalism are, today, both gods (160). Science has become the Truth and the only way that we can know the world. Science teaches us that it cannot be proven that nature feels pain. Furthermore, there is not proven causal connection between the destruction of the wild and any pain they might feel. And by extension, only humans feel pain and are atop the hierarchy of natural things (219). And capitalism is revered as the god of production (160). These are arguments that will be raised by others authors.

I will address these numerous arguments in greater detail. My thinking is governed by the idea that religion has certainly not been without blame in our current crisis, but it is certainly not the only agency that must take a share of the blame. And while Jensen and I disagree with the solutions I think he said it best when he stated, “it’s not only Christians who believe that the world was made for civilized humans” (232).

So, Lynn White ignited quite the debate. In the following section I will discuss the Lynn White argument and the response to it and the consequences of that article. I focus on White, because I think his article is a turning point in the faith-based environmental movement and because he discusses a host of issues pertinent to environmental concerns, for example paganism and human-nature dualisms. But it is equally true that I could have focused on Emerson’s transcendentalism as Albanese has done, or on the issues raised by Leopold or Muir, or perhaps the nature religion of Andrew Jackson Davis (Albanese, 1992, 1). But for the reasons stated I will look at
White. So what exactly was Lynn White’s argument? Let us start by examining his arguments and the numerous responses to it.

*Religion: The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis?*

**The Lynn White Effect -**

Some, for example Hargrove (1986), lament the writing of White’s article. Hargrove contends that White’s thesis was essentially correct and his arguments irrefutable (vxi – vxii). He further argues that the article has become the reference point for religious-environment debate. This is unfortunate because it places the blame on Christianity and given the validity of the arguments made, the article presents no solutions. Hargrove ultimately concludes that it “would probably have been better if the Lynn White debate had never occurred” (xvii). Not all commentators take such a negative position.

Gottlieb (1996 & 2006) for instance sees value in White’s article and Hill (1998) suggests that White’s article “provoked an avalanche of reaction” (2). There is certainly some merit to these points. Prior to White’s article, there had been sporadic attempts to connect faith to environmental issues. Hargrove (1986) suggests that pre-eminent environmentalist Aldo Leopold was concerned with this relationship. He, Leopold, argued that changes in ethics could not be achieved without “an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions”. Leopold continued, stating that the “proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it” (cited in Hargrove, viii).
And there is the oft cited case of St Francis, but not until White’s articles did the idea gain wide spread attention.

While acknowledging that some of the response to White’s article has been defensive, Hill credits White’s article and the response to it for much of the faith based movement. The results have been a substantial “integration of religion and ecology” with contributions coming from a number of denominations (2).

The works cited in this literature review will bear this out. Many of the authors reference White directly, others are influenced by his arguments. Almost none of the literature pre-dates the White article. A few isolated cases notwithstanding none of the faith-based programs existed before 1967. Thus, it certainly appears that White’s article was a seminal moment on the issue. So, what are the arguments presented in this controversial essay?

White (1967) suggests that the union of science and technology dates back approximately four generations and is essentially a western invention. He further argues that in practice it was driven by the Baconion creed that meant “scientific knowledge means technological power over nature” (White, no page). Yet, he notes that the pursuits of science and technology in the west are far older than is generally accepted, predating, White claims, the 17th century Scientific Revolution and the 18th century Industrial Revolution. He concludes that both the scientific and technological movements began and “acquired their character” during the Middle Ages, and so it is necessary to the question the assumptions of that period (White, no page).

He begins this analysis by describing the changes in plowing that occurred in Western Europe. Where cross-plough had once been the norm, Europeans introduced
vertical plowing, a move, White argues, that separated humans from nature and placed humankind as the exploiter of nature. It is no coincidence, he posits, that from these technologies descended our own ruthless technologies. He also points to a change in illustrated calendars around 830 AD. In these new calendars are depictions of man “coercing the world around them – plowing, harvesting, chopping trees, butchering pigs” (White).

From these seemingly benign illustrations comes the crux of White’s argument; that these “novelties” were in keeping with the intellectual patterns of the day and that those patterns are shaped, to a large degree, by religion. White contended that how people treated their environment depended on how they viewed themselves in relation to that environment. It was true then, and is true now, he felt that “human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion” (White).

Some claim that we now live in a “post Christian” era. Accepting that much of modern day language and thinking is no longer Christian, White disputes that we have abandoned the substance of Christian thought. In particular, he notes that we are “dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress”. A faith he states is rooted in Judeo-Christian doctrine. Just what did this doctrine teach humans about nature and their place therein?

The “greatest psychic revolution” of our culture, claims White, was the victory of Christianity over paganism. In this shift, we moved from a cyclical view of time to a non-repetitive and linear concept. This is evidenced by the step-by-step creation of the earth, culminating with the creation of Adam. White’s reading of that story is that man then names all the creatures, giving him dominance over them all. The earth and its
bounty were designed for man’s benefit. All created to serve man and with no implicit value of their own. This is the essence of the dominion interpretation of the Bible. It is countered by the stewardship argument, which claims that we are guardians or protectors of the Earth. Which interpretation is correct remains contentious and will be addressed at length in the literature review.

An additional effect of the victory of Christianity over paganism was the belief in the transcendence of God over nature. In Christian thought, man shares this transcendence, creating a dualism of man and nature. This view is contrary to the views of the ancient pagans who held that every tree, spring, hill and stream possessed its guardian spirit. Before one chopped or mined or dammed, humans had to placate this guardian spirit. With the death of paganism, White concludes, Christianity gave license to people to “exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects”. And thus, “the spirits in natural objects, which formerly had protected nature from man, evaporated” (White).

Finally, White differentiates between Latin and Orthodox Christianity. In eastern thought intellectual blindness was sinful. The cure for sin was therefore to be found in clear thinking. In contrast western thought considered moral evil to be a sin and the salvation was to be found in right conduct. This dependence on action rather than contemplation, concludes White, is more conducive to the conquest of nature.

Despite his criticisms, White did in fact believe there could be a religious response to the environmental crisis. Indeed noting the crisis was inherently religious he stated that the “remedy must also be essentially religious” (White, no page). He
applauded the Beatniks who adopted Zen Buddhism. He nonetheless concluded, probably rightly so, that it would not find mass support in the west.

    Hence, if we cannot find a new religion we must rethink our current religious practices. His suggestion? Christianity needs to adopt the ethics of Saint Francis. With this Patron Saint of Ecology would come an alternative view of nature and humans. It would be a “profoundly religious” calling for “the spiritual autonomy of all parts of nature” (White, no page).

    As already noted, there have been arguments both for and against this thesis. Hargrove (1986) points to a number of outcomes. He asserts that White’s arguments were essentially correct and it was therefore difficult to find decisive errors (xvi). Unable to find error and move in a different direction we have, Hargrove argues, been traveling the same circular road, making no progress in solving the issues White raised. He further argues that people were not willing to accept either of White’s proposed solutions and the response has been “overwhelmingly defensive, if not reactionary” (xiv). Hargrove concludes that while there was much to commend in White’s essay, the outcomes have been lamentable and ultimately it might have been best if the article were never written.

    Theologian John Cobb Junior, in *Is it Too Late? A Theology of Ecology*, agrees with the White hypothesis that Christianity is responsible for the environmental crisis. He did not, however, agree that the answer lay in the non-western traditions. Cobb instead argued that the answer lay in examining the Bible and focusing on those passages that supported an environmental ethic (Cobb, 1972, cited in Hargrove, xiv). This has been the approach favored by the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN). I will discuss
the group’s efforts in subsequent sections, suffice to say that their website has a prolific list of Biblical references which, they claim, call for humans to protect nature.

The second critic Hargrove (1986) cites is philosopher John Passmore. Passmore concluded that neither western nor non-western religious thought could reverse the environmental crisis. Christianity could not be reinterpreted he argued, because of a history of ambiguity. There have been such divergent claims in Christian history that it is not possible to find a basis for any argument. Thus, the “ability to justify anything ultimately amounts to the ability to justify nothing” (Passmore, 1974, cited in Hargrove, xv). This echoes the quote cited earlier by Phillips.

Thus on the question of White’s thesis I would conclude that my position mirrors those of Rasmussen (1992) and Fowler (1995). Rasmussen (1992) concedes that perhaps Christianity is deserving of White’s criticism. He argues, however, that the Bible can also offer something positive, that in fact it is “a story of hope, of the possibilities open for free humans to serve God and free nature and humankind from oppression” (address to the Conference on Human Values and the Environment, 1992).

Further, I agree with the sentiments of Gardner (2003) who suggests that religions can read the scriptures in the current context. As he puts it, “reading the ‘signs of the times’ through the lens of their own scriptures” (no page). Far from a revolutionary idea, Gardner argues that for centuries, religions have understood their central teachings in light of the current conditions.

I will present many arguments, some of which will condemn religion and its treatment of the environment. I am not entirely convinced by these arguments, but I think that they do have some merit. While there is evidence that religion has been
hostile or indifferent to nature, I would argue that the opposite is true also. I have concluded that there is much in the religious texts that advises mankind to act with care. If Saint Francis and Moses Maimonides found something in their faith that called for a stewardship ethic then perhaps there is something in religion that fosters in people an attitude of stewardship. Or at least has the potential.

It is important to understand what is written in religious texts, because we will struggle to change our thinking while “shackled to our existing language” (Dustin, McAvoy and Schultz, 2002, 90). It is equally important, I feel, to explore the practice of religious stewardship, as Jensen argues, “how these religions are expressed on the ground, in the real world”. He continues that what is important is “not how they play out theoretically, not how their rhetoric plays out, not how we wish they would play out, not how they could play out under some ideal imaginary circumstances, but how they have played out” (288).

How does religion play out, environmentally in the real world? The arguments again prove inconclusive. There have been a number of historical, religious figures associated with a strong environmental ethic. Despite his scathing argument, White pointed to “a few good moments” in Christianity’s environmental history. Specifically, White named Saint Francis as the model “Christian environmentalist” (Fowler, 1995, 59).

Critics have denounced both the medieval and renaissance church for their treatment of the environment. Some (for example Cobb and Wilkinson, 1980, cited in Fowler) have argued, in a similar vein to White, that the beginnings of science rooted in the 17th century laid the foundations for the idea that nature is here primarily for human
use (Fowler, 63). Yet not all the writings are negative and there are many who feel that the church and religious teachings have much to contribute to the environmental cause.

Fowler (1995) has contended that a few positive examples notwithstanding, the overall environmental picture within the church was rather glum. With this, I would also agree. I would also point out that this was the case not only within the church, but also within society as a whole. Not until the 1960s and 1970s did environmental concerns become widespread in the United States. Walls (2008) claims that in the early 1970s there were “no ‘environmentalists’” and that the term ecology was simply an “obscure branch of biological science” (no page). So while it is likely true that the church was negligent or ambivalent towards environmental concerns, the same can be said of secular society.

I would further agree with White that the solution to the environmental problems must, at least in part, be a religious one. This is in line with a number of thinkers, (for example Carroll, Brockelman & Westfall, 1997 and McDaniel, 1997) who are not convinced that science, reason and the promise of technological solutions will prove effective.

Religions can demonstrate both positive and negative attitudes towards nature. I would argue that the fault lies in human interpretation of sacred texts. We, I believe, have either ignored the positive (stewardship) to focus on the negative (dominion) texts. Or we have interpreted the texts in a spirit of malice. As Matthew Scully (2003) suggests, “It is time we inspected that original warrant to ‘subdue the earth’ in both letter and spirit” (20).
I would suggest that the Christianity bears some burden of guilt in the current environmental crisis. I would argue that the mistakes, while sometimes explicitly, were most often implicit, it might be said that theirs were sins of omission rather than commission. In this regard, I think that the religious institutions have simply been a microcosm of the larger society. I will discuss in later sections the role that progress and the pursuit of material wealth have played in the environmental crisis and how society and Christianity were complicit in this regard. Richard Rohr has put it thus, "why is it that church people by and large mirror the larger population on almost all counts? ... On the whole, we tend to be just as protective of power, prestige, and possessions as everyone else" (Gardner, 2003, no page). Thus, whatever the merits and demerits of White’s article it served to bring an important question to the fore.

White has been credited with waking the Christian community to the new challenge of religion and ecology. The point can certainly be made that White’s article apparently awoke more than just the religious community. Both the environmental community and scientists in general were influenced by White’s thesis. It must be said that the impact was not always positive.

Carl Pope, Executive Director of the Sierra Club, states “an entire generation of environmentalists was soured on religion” based on what he argues was a skewed reading of the article (Gardner, 2003, no page). Pope declares that environmentalists largely ignored White’s claims that the religious community had a role to play in solving the environmental crisis (Gardner). As a result, Pope feels the environmental movement has accepted that religion is to blame and has shunned the religious community. This, Pope argues, has been a mistake (Gardner).
Recent research at Duke University suggests these sentiments still abound. The authors note, “the mainstream environmental community thinks that Christianity is largely to blame for our ecological crisis” (Basgall, 2002, no page). They were further discouraged that “the mainstream belief in the secular environmental community is that Christianity has no relevance to help us get out of the crisis” (no page). Interestingly, one of the researchers states that as a Christian and a scientist he believes that "one of the deepest and most important reasons why we should be concerned about conserving biological diversity is an ethical one" (no page).

Hill (1998) states that many agreed with White and carried his arguments even further, suggesting that Christianity would have to be abandoned to save the earth. Some proposed that humans return to ancient earth-worshiping traditions. This, unsurprisingly, alienated the religious community and portrayed the environmental movement as hostile to Christianity (2).

Scientists, at least recently, have been more receptive to religious involvement in environmental concerns. Many scientists have in fact, called on the religious community to add their voice to the environmental movement. A coalition of scientists, Nobel Laureates among them, created an open letter to the religious community. Acknowledging “the limitations of science and the potential of faith to promote environmental reform,” the scientists also called for a “spirit of ‘common cause and joint action’” (Feldman and Moseley, 2002, 5). Eighty three religious leaders responded, declaring the “environmental crisis to be ‘intrinsically religious’” (5). They further implored all faiths to include in their teachings how to care for the “Sacred Creation” (5).
Feldman and Moseley (2002, 10) note that most faith-based environmental initiatives in their study began after the issuance of that letter. They further found that a number of the environmental programs were guided and lead by scientists, rather than religious leaders (10).

After this brief introduction to White’s thesis, I will now consider in detail the various points. The question of dominion versus stewardship is perhaps the heart of the discussion of religion and the environment. Therefore, I will begin with it. That discussion will focus primarily on the scriptural mandate to dominate, or as some argue to protect, nature. I will next explore the scientific revolution and what this has meant to our relationship with nature. I will also briefly look at the evolution from Paganism to Christianity and the implications for nature. It is certainly true that these issues are interrelated; therefore, some overlap can be anticipated. Where possible, however, I will endeavor to discuss each on its own merits.

**Stewardship versus Dominion –**

The questions of stewardship and dominion are integral to the discussion of religion and the environment. Stewardship is, according to Fowler, the “leading note” of Protestant environmentalism (Feldman and Moseley, 2002, 6). Feldman and Moseley argue that the definition of stewardship remains a matter of debate (6). And while the terms are open to interpretation, the essence of the stewardship/dominion debate is this: are humans the benefactors of God’s creation and therefore free to use it as we see fit? Are we God’s special creation, separate and above nature? And does this special place give us the right to use nature in any way we choose? This is the crux of
the dominion argument. Alternatively, are we minders of god’s creation with a duty to protect it? Does our special standing obligate us to protect the lesser creatures? Is our treatment of God’s creation a reflection of our relationship to god? These are the arguments for a stewardship approach.

Numerous writers have tackled these issues, particularly since the publication of White’s essay. In this section, I will introduce a number of authors, some whose arguments are in accord with White and others who suggest that there is much in the biblical teachings that steers us toward environmental stewardship for example Austin and Hessel (1995) and Fowler (1995).

The dominion-stewardship argument is grounded in the book of Genesis. The debate revolves around two, apparently contradicting verses. The first giving people dominion over nature and the second admonishing them to protect creation. It is in Genesis 1:28 that one finds the term dominion. The word dominion has been translated as meaning *subdue* or *rule* and many (for example Nash, 1989, 90 and Toynbee, 1974, 146) suggest religious people have taken that interpretation to its literal extreme. As White wrote in his 1967 essay, it is written in the Bible that man was commanded to subdue the Earth and that all living creatures should have fear and dread of humans.

This verse is in apparent contradiction to Genesis 2:15. In this second verse, often used to demonstrate that Christianity does indeed call for a stewardship approach, God places humans in the Garden of Eden and commands them to guard it. According to Berman, this “imposes upon humans a stewardship relationship to the world in which they live” (no page). Mahan, (2001) who argues that there is a thread of environmentalism running through the Bible, calls Genesis 2:15 the “first earthkeeping
principle” (no page). Relying on the Hebrew translation, he notes that in this verse we are called to serve and preserve the Earth (no page).

Those who follow a stewardship approach see as humans having a duty to protect God’s creation. Those of the dominion persuasion would suggest that the earth and its resources were given us to be used as we see fit. Both sides turn to scripture to prove their point. The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), for example, provides a considerable list of scriptural examples to support their argument that religion calls for us to protect nature. Their topics range from “Jesus Christ’s Relationship to All of Creation” to “Creation Declares the Glory of God” and “The Interrelationship Between Humanity and the Rest of Creation” (EEN, Scripture, 2009). For a more complete discussion of the EEN approach see the discussion In Defense of Religion, where I will explore the topic more thoroughly.

Feldman and Moseley (2002) contend that the meaning of stewardship remains unresolved, particularly among Protestants (6). They point to 5 themes of stewardship. The first is that stewardship presents a theocentric perspective. That is, people have been given responsibility to care for God’s creation. This view further purports that God is loving and cares for all parts of his creation (6). The second theme concerns the holistic nature of creation. This theme focuses on the interrelatedness of people and nature. It also considers the relationships between humans, nature and God and the importance of community. The next premise relates to Jesus. This encompasses a number of thoughts, including that stewardship was central to Jesus’ teaching or that the incarnation of Christ symbolizes God’s love for all creation.
The final two themes deal with sin and consequences. Feldman and Moseley (2002) note that for many Protestants sin is present in both individuals and social institutions. Sin, they argue is the “foundation of failed stewardship” (6). Finally, Protestants understand that there are consequences for failed stewardship. Different faith communities emphasize different themes, from “celebration of creation” among evangelicals and “stern duty” among mainline Protestants (6). As I work this review, each of these themes will become apparent.

The use and meaning of the word dominion also remains contested. Whether we have put much thought into it or not, I would argue we have not, the human species has taken dominion to mean domination. That is, the planet and its resources were put here for our benefit and use. The counter argument and the emerging idea is that dominion, in fact, means service to and care of the planet, as some (for example Fowler, 33) argue Jesus was in service to the planet.

Others have suggested that those who justify abuse of the planet with the dominion argument do so by distorting the concept of dominion (Hill, 1998, 136). Hill argues with the coming of Jesus, “an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness have dominion” (136). Thus, Christ has brought an end to sin and has delivered “salvation and hope”. Hill therefore concludes that “true dominion is not destructive or selfish” because it “finds its source and meaning in the Creator” (136 – 137).

Again, it is not clear that dominion has been widely interpreted as Hill understands it. But, Hill’s vision of dominion certainly provides an alternative view of the dominion argument. This perspective can be useful in environmental terms.
Fink (1998) has some thoughts on the Jewish perspective of the stewardship/dominion debate. It is Fink’s contention that Judaism, or at least mainstream traditions, did not understand dominion to mean a “divine carte blanche to exploit nature” (1998, no page). Using earlier arguments, Fink notes the words v’yirdu and yarad; which translate to “take dominion” and “to descend”, respectively. Thus, the argument goes, only when humans act as responsible stewards are we preeminent. When we abuse creation, we sink below the animals.

And the Jewish environmentalist deals with many of the same issues that their Christian counterpart must, particularly how to interpret religious texts. Note, for example, the Genesis question. Fink describes the familiar creation of the world, with humans appearing on the sixth day, after water, plants, land and animals. Some suggest this implies God essentially “left the best for last”. That humanity was the pinnacle of God’s creation (Fink, 1998). This argument is extended to mean that God created everything for the benefit of the “guest of honor” (humanity). This interpretation is not unchallenged. Fink (1998) points to another school of thought, which argues that people were created last to remind them they are “a divine afterthought”, created after even the gnats (Fink).

Despite this stewardship argument - and other dissenting voices which I will address in subsequent sections - there is much support for the idea that religion has taught a model of domination of nature. Gottlieb (2004), while noting the positive aspects of religion and nature, argues that historically religion has taught that non-human nature exists to serve human needs. Furthermore, he argues that nature has been framed in human terms in an attempt to meet our needs (9).
We continue to see this idea even as the concept of faith-based stewardship takes root. Perhaps the most noteworthy example is that of the Pope. While both Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have embraced the environmental movement the message is still focused on the needs of people. And the Catholic Church is unlikely, some argue, to endorse measures that reduce or limit human populations or limit human use of natural resources (Stone, 2008). I will explore this question in subsequent discussions.

While this is a compelling argument, it does not tell the whole tale. Gottlieb (2004) himself acknowledges that there is more to the stewardship/dominion debate than the Genesis 1:28 argument of mastery of nature. He contends that religions have “represented the voice of nature to humanity” (9). Religious writings celebrate the human bond to the non-human, reminding us that we are tied to the other livings beings, to the air, to the water and to the land. It should be understood that there are a wide range of religious writings. Some of these messages are positive, some negative. Yet, to understand the current eco-theology it is necessary to attend to the entire spectrum of religious writings (Gottlieb, 9).

Moving beyond the Genesis question, Austin and Hessel (cited in Fowler, 1995) argue that the New Testament is a model for pro-environmentalism, but Fowler argues that the New Testament proves problematic. Fowler himself suggests that eco-theology can be traced back to Christ, who was the model of caring for the environment (Fowler, 33). Yet, he also acknowledges that there is not agreement on this point. Specifically, he remarks that references exist suggesting humans were more important to Christ than the animal world (37).
These contradictory arguments serve to illustrate the fact that how one reads the Bible or scripture plays an important part in the formation of a stewardship or a dominion perspective. This is an assertion that will be repeated throughout this work. This example also serves to highlight that there does not exist a consensus on what religion instructs with regard to nature.

At the Global Forum of Religious Leaders (1990) it was suggested that the “environmental crisis in intrinsically religious” and that “all faith traditions…and teachings firmly instruct us to revere and care for the natural” (cited in Carroll, Brockelman & Westfall, 2). I would suggest that it is not always clear that religion does “firmly instruct” reverence for nature. Feuerbach (1957) supports my argument, stating that the environment “has no value, no interest for Christians. The Christian thinks only of himself” (Feuerbach, 287).

Thomas Berry (1973) delivered an equally scathing assessment, positing that Christians have “contempt for the world or hatred of it” (135). Furthermore, if an eco-theology does exist it would appear that religious leaders and their followers have often chosen to ignore this scriptural mandate. What does one make of these striking contradictions? I think that two equally important questions arise: what does the Bible instruct with regards to nature. And; how have people of faith interpreted and applied religious writings.

Gruen (1993) hypothesizes that certain frameworks have developed which have separated men from women and nature. One such framework, grounded in religion and developing along with agriculture, saw in nature a source of fear, in the shape of storms, droughts and other natural disasters, and simultaneously as a means of survival. The
farming life brought with it more uncertainty and greater risk and so man’s desire to
dominate grew, argues Gruen (63 -64).

Continuing this line of thought, Gruen presents the notion that the urge to
dominate was “often sought through ‘divine intervention’”. Noting that women were often
equated with nature and were subsequently also feared. Gruen concludes that “in
religious mythology, if not in actual practice, women often served as symbols for the
uncontrollable and harmful and thus were sacrificed to purify the community and
appease the gods” (63 – 64).

While this study is concerned with religious institutions rather than religious
individuals it is interesting and worthwhile to consider how Christians understand the
stewardship questions. Guth, et al (1995) suggest that there is little research on how
religion affects environment. They point to the few surveys that have been conducted. In
the studies they cite that Christians were found to favor a mastery over nature attitude
more than non-Christians (367). Additionally, those with a “literalist” understanding of
scripture were less concerned with environmental issues. It must be though, that the
research found commitment to the environment “varied considerably by religious
tradition” (367).

As did White, Gruen (1993) implicates the coupling of religion and the scientific
revolution in the abuse of nature. Religion, during the rise of industry, was balanced by
“a belief system that centered on the empirical”, giving rise to a mechanistic worldview.
This combination, according to Gruen, “laid yet another conceptual foundation for the
manipulation of animals and nature” (64).
In later sections, I will introduce several defenses of religions. One of which is the idea that the larger problem is not faith, but unchecked pursuit of material wealth, which, defenders say, is counter to religious teachings. There are some, however, who see religion as complicit in this pursuit. Claiming that global warming, environmental regulation and natural resources seem strange topics for religious attacks; Phillips (2006) highlights a number of ways that conservative (fundamentalist he concludes) Christianity has championed pro-business anti-environmental positions. From the brusque calls of Christian Reconstructionists to abolition of the EPA to groups (such as the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty) these Christian groups endorse corporate and development positions (238).

While development might not in and of itself be anti-environmental, critics claim that the fundamental elements of the Christian church support views in line with the dominion interpretation on scripture. Orthodox priest, Father Charles Bender, understands the movement’s creed as “a false gospel” which calls on people to exploit the earth (Phillips, 238).

Discussing environmental issues and the rights of nature, Dustin, McAvoy and Schultz (2002) address these questions of unchecked materialism. Americans have failed to appreciate the dwindling natural resources, with predictable consequences. And religion’s role in this? The authors conclude that the idea that nature has rights is foreign to western thought. The result, they suggest, is of the Judeo Christian notion that we are masters of nature and it is God’s will to exploit nature (21).

I contended that perhaps, at least in part, there has been an issue of consumerism unchecked by religion. On the contrary, Phillips points to the union of
capitalism and religion. He claims that there are constituents within in the Christian churches who adhere to the belief that “God’s blessings are not confined to the afterlife” (Goff and Harvey, cited in Phillips, 249). And that God in fact wishes us to have material wealth in this world. Rather than promoting the simple life and indifference to material wealth these churches are in actuality justifying wealth (Phillips, 238).

Similar claims are made by Scully (2002). He points to individuals who seem to have commandeered both the stewardship and dominion arguments to justify their actions. Note British philosopher Roger Scruton who writing on dominion notes that “the guiding principle of modern dominion” is that “‘we are now stewards of the animal kingdom. Henceforth, no species exists without our permission’” (Scully, 117).

It appears that such people understand both stewardship and dominion to mean complete satisfaction of their wants. As Scully (2002) argues, “here in the end, all the stewards and those they serve get exactly what they want, their duties always bearing such an uncanny resemblance to their desires. No human appetite goes unmet. The ivory hunters and carvers get their ivory. The hunters get their trophies. Presumably even Asian inamoratos get their aphrodisiac ‘cures’ from the horns and ivory” (117–118).

I will introduce one last author who addresses the stewardship question from the perspective of animal rights, specifically vegetarianism. While most commentators focus on the dominion and stewardship verses in Genesis, John Dear argues for stewardship by directing us to the fact that the Garden of Eden was a place of no violence, no suffering and no exploitation. Furthermore, both people and animals were vegetarian (no page).
Dear is a “Catholic priest, a peace activist, a writer, and a vegetarian” (2010, no page). Dear makes a number of arguments, as a Christian, for a vegetarian lifestyle. I will introduce these ideas at points throughout this work. For now, I introduce his belief that a vegetarian lifestyle reflects “a basic reverence and compassion towards God’s creatures” and “responsible stewardship of the Earth” (no page). This is his interpretation of a stewardship approach.

In addition to the Genesis quotes, he notes a number of passages which he claims support a vegetarian lifestyle. For example, he cites Hosea, where God makes a covenant with all the beasts, birds and creeping creatures that “all living creatures may lie down without living in fear” and Daniel, a nonviolent resister who was also a vegetarian (no page).

As I noted I will return to Dear’s thoughts at various points in this work. Dear is not only the only advocate of the compatibility of vegetarianism and Christianity, but I present him, because his is a particularly interesting case, I think. He is part of a partnership with animal rights group PETA. It is intriguing to read Dear’s condemnations of factory farms. It reads like a like a PETA brochure, with the additional rationale that not only is this a terrible practice, but it is torture of God’s creatures and contrary to Christ’s virtue of non-violence.

I will address this and other seemingly counterintuitive partnerships in later sections. Here I will make a point that I will repeat at various points throughout this work on the value of religion in the environmental movement. The addition of people such as John Dear carries weight with the religious community that a group like PETA probably can never achieve. Certainty environmental or animal rights groups can lament the
treatment of the earth or of animals. But clergy and religious figures can educate on how this is an affront to God and to religious sensibilities. This is critical, I feel.

**Human/Nature Dualisms –**

The question of stewardship/dominion is not the only issue implicated in religion-based abuse of the environment. A second, and I would argue related issue, raised in the failure of religions to protect the environment are the dualisms understood in the Bible. White made this argument in *The Historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis* and it is echoed by a number of other writers, including Moran (2006), Berry (1973) and Ruether (1975).

Moran (2006) claims that the “nature-culture dichotomy has been central to Western thinking since time immemorial” (7), although he never directly names religion as the origin of this dichotomy. White was more explicit, arguing that the sacred texts of Judaism and Christianity created a dualism between people and nature. This positioned people as “masters, not members, of the natural world” (Nash, 88) and that creation existed for the sole benefit of humans. Consequently humans were free to use, and abuse, nature as they saw fit. Thus, out of the dualism grew the justification to abuse nature. This is the dominion argument.

Both Berry (1973) and Ruether (1975) argued the ecological crisis is grounded in the dualism of body and soul. Ruether felt that the essence of being human is being unitary. By this, she speaks of a unity of body and soul, which is in direct contrast to the split between body and soul that she suggests is dominant in society. This dualism between body and soul proves problematic for environmentalism, because the soul
becomes superior to the body and the body represents the earth (Bouma-Prediger, 136).

For Berry (1973), the dualism was the split between Creator and Creation. Berry posited that “the rift between body and soul” was a reflection of a split between God and his Creation. Similar to Ruether’s argument, Berry argued that there was a split between the spiritual and the material and since spiritual was deemed more valuable this created a license to abuse the material; the Earth. Berry also argued that the diminished value of the material removed it from ethical considerations.

Birkeland (1993) also notes the dualism between the spiritual and the material. She however implicates patriarchy and argues that under this so-called “‘hierarchical dualism’” there is a division along gender lines. Birkeland recognizes, as did Berry, that those things associated with the mind and spirit were prized over those associated with the material. She, however, explores the gender implications positing that in patriarchal societies the masculine is equated with the spiritual and women with nature. This higher status given to mind and men has created “a complex morality based on domination and exploitation has developed in conjunction with the devaluing of nature and ‘feminine’ values” (18 -19).

Lahar (1993) acknowledges that the human/nature split is “crucial to address and redress”. She remarks that it both underlies and undermines how we interact with the world around us. It is her position that by separating ourselves from nature we have severed our “human experience…from an organic context”. The result: we are no longer aware of the controls that nature places on human actions. Further, the split has
“profound psychological and social implications as it supports our perception of others” (96). Others have made similar arguments.

Moran (2006) acknowledges the dichotomy and further argues it “stands in the way of resolving our environmental crises” (7). Westerners, with this deeply ingrained dualism, have externalized nature. In order to see ourselves as part of nature, rather than apart from it what is needed is a re-conceptualization. While necessary, Moran does not deceive himself that this will be an easy undertaking. These are long held views.

There is a school of thought, which adds to the dualism argument the idea that the material (earth) is considered evil in Christianity. Jensen (2006), for example notes that Christians have thus come to see the world as flawed and dangerous and is never truly home (285). We have no connection to it. And it is not just Christians who are guilty of this separating themselves from the worldly. Buddhists, he states are “trained away from their bodies” (285).

As with much of the faith-based debate, there is not consensus on this position. Hill (1998) concedes, “Christianity…has often been human-centered” (10). Even the most recent catechism of the Catholic Church ignores the value and meaning of creatures other than humans, placing humans at the apex of creation and ignoring the “integral worth and dignity” of the earth and natural resources (10). Hill (1998) envisions a new “Christian anthropology” that values the uniqueness of the human species. At the same time, it must not allow this special standing to give humans the right to dominate the rest of creation (11).
While acknowledging that people may have been focused on salvation at the expense of the earth, Hill argues that this is not the biblical perspective (62). In his reading, scripture has “a sacramental perspective” and the “visible is linked to the invisible, the material to the spiritual” (62). Referring to the Old Testament, Hill states that scripture was not “soul-centered or even human-centered” (62).

Hill provides an interesting defense of his claim that dualisms are not implied in the scriptures. The incarnation of Jesus Christ as a human being suggests the value in the material. Through the incarnation, “God…became one with the physical and material world” (98). This perspective, argues Hill, has been understood in the Eastern Orthodox Church. As Russian Patriarch Alexy noted, “the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus has originated the renewal not only of humans, but of the whole of nature” (99).

The incarnation has a number of implications for the faith-based environmental movement. Hill (1998) suggests that it “brings new dignity to all of creation” and further that God is not an isolated “sky god” residing in some transcendental realm. Instead, he is “intimately present to the world” (99). The presence of Christ in a human body “raises the physical and material to new dignity and sacredness” concludes Hill (100).

Hill notes several religious scholars who agree with this view of incarnation. He points to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who “could see Christ in the heart of the world” (102). Teihard saw Jesus as the center of things and revealed through matter. Facing opposition from the church, he nonetheless sought to “link Christianity with the material world” (102). The teachings of theologian Karl Rahner are similarly offered as being “profoundly relevant to our concern for the future of our environment” (Hill, 103).
Furthermore, Hill (1998) points to the eucharist to denounce the idea that these dualisms are inherent in Christianity. Acknowledging that “Christians…. have lost sight of the meanings of eucharist” (140), Hill nonetheless suggests that eucharist is applicable to the environment. He argues that the eucharistic symbols are “rooted in matter”, from bread and wine made from wheat and grapes to the flesh and blood of the Lord. The conclusion, according to Hill, is that “Christian orthodoxy rejects the disparagement of material things” (140).

It is not readily apparent that Christianity takes this same view. Hill's views are useful, I would argue, because they present the vision of how Christianity can be interpreted to promote environmental ethics. While it may be true that dominion has been understood as domination, this need not be the case. There are alternatives and importantly alternatives that can be based in scripture.

Anthropomorphism is a topic that is often raised. I introduce it here, because I think that it is closely tied to the separation of humans from nature. How we view our place in nature and our duties towards nature will, I argue, shape how we value the natural world. Anthropocentrism becomes challenging to environmentalism, because it implies that “humans are the measure of all value” (Nash, 1989, 10). While the Genesis argument is predicated on an anthropocentric view, Nash argues that anthropocentrism is rooted in the origins of Christianity and that the Bible and the Genesis terminology was simply a justification for the domination mindset (17). Nash states that from the origins of Christianity, when the ancient religions were abandoned, the ethical consideration of nature ended. An assumption emerged that nature existed to serve humans.
A valid argument has also been made that while human chauvinism must be addressed “it cannot be overcome without addressing male-centeredness and sexism (Birkeland, 1993, 16). Birkeland continues that women have historically been associated with earth and nature. Given this association with the feminine, nature is “regarded as existing to serve Man’s physical needs” (24). I will return to Birkeland in subsequent sections, where we will see that she is skeptical that religion, existing as it does in patriarchal society, can effectively stem environmental destruction.

On a slightly different track, Jensen (2006) suggests that any religion that is not rooted to a particular place can never be sustainable (186). In this, he includes all civilized religions, among them Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. Presumably, this excluded indigenous religions. This is so, states Jensen, because if religion is to teach us how to live, it must teach us how to live in the place we inhabit. Thus, people in Virginia do not need the same guidance as those in Kathmandu (186).

I do agree with the argument that people need site-specific information. For a number of reasons I disagree with Jensen’s conclusion that this precludes religion from teaching an environmental ethic. First, we face global environmental problems that are not particular to place. And while solutions may need to be tailored to specific locations, we now have shared problems. Jensen cites several examples of indigenous Canadian people and how their spirituality guides them to live in accord with their natural surroundings. I see no reason why this cannot be true of mainstream religions. I, in fact, chose to focus on small locations in part because of the belief that people understand their own peculiar circumstances and it is easier to make environmental progress when we focus on local issues.
What may be lacking is not the ability for religion to tailor its environmental message to local conditions; it may be the will to make substantive changes, a claim that Jensen also makes. I will return to those at various points in this work.

**Paganism versus Christianity –**

White noted the evolution of Christianity from paganism and an extension of that, the growth into a scientific and industrial world. As already noted, White viewed the victory of Christianity over Paganism as a pivotal event in our cultural evolution.

The end of Paganism is instructive, I think, in the question of faith and nature. While I have noted and will argue there is much the Christian faith can contribute to the environmental movement, it can be argued that something critical was lost with the end of Paganism. As this literature proceeds, we will see many examples in religious texts, which speak to environmental concerns in the Christian faith. What seems to be missing is an intrinsic love or respect of nature. Perhaps it is, as Fink (1995) notes of the Jewish faith, environmental issues were incidental (no page). Issues were dealt with as they arose. This seems to echo the arguments of Hill (1998) who argues that the Hebrews derived their anthropology “from below” or on their daily experiences (36).

This is contrary to the Pagan tradition where nature was intimately tied to the tradition. Many people, perhaps wrongly, associate native cultures with concern for the environment. This association is not present with the Christian faiths. Yet it was certainly present in Pagan times and so there might be some merit in White’s claims. Others (for example Hughes, 1986 and Creedon, 1994) have echoed the claims made by White.
Hughes’ (1986) telling of the death of Pan demonstrates well the consequences of this split. Hughes notes that the writings of Pan’s death coincide with the rule of Tiberius Caesar and the rise of Christianity. He further notes that this was symbolic of a new way of thinking about nature (21). The ancient Greek and Roman faiths “sacralised nature” and their demise similarly meant the death of “the personification of nature’s indwelling divine power” and so the natural world lost its sacredness (Hughes, 21). And what were the consequences for nature? I quote Hughes directly for I think he says it most eloquently:

The groves of speaking trees could now be cut down, in fact had to be cut down so naïve peasants would no longer hear voices in the leaves. Mountains became heaps of nonliving stones where an unseen musician no longer piped. Animals once sacrificed to the gods now became mere “game” to be hunted for sport…Nothing in the created world resonated in the old way any longer (21).

Creedon (1994) for example cites the shift, between 1600 and 1700 BC, from a “creation Goddess” (Gaia) to “more patriarchal gods” (277). Gaia, the “Great Earth Mother” (285) was replaced by a male god, a god of war. Eisler (1987) called it a “cataclysmic turning point…of Western civilization” (cited in Creedon 1994, 277). Thus we saw a shift from societies that worshipped the “life-generating and life-nurturing properties of the universe” to those who revered the ability to “enforce domination” (cited in Creedon 1994, 277).

Birkeland (1993) presents a similar view, suggesting that the dualism between human and nature is an outgrowth of Enlightenment thinking. Her view also has echoes
of White’s arguments regarding the evolution from paganism to Christianity. It is during the Enlightenment that the “dominant paradigm of modernity”; the growth ethic, emerges (23 – 24). It was during this “Age of Reason”, Birkeland argues, that the cyclical view of history was succeeded by “the concept that Society evolves in a forward progression”. Progress, she concludes, has been understood as individual freedom and self-realization, which has ultimately “meant transcendence from social and natural constraints” (23 – 24). Birkeland’s conclusion is that “Patriarchal spirituality has been transcendent and earth-disdaining rather than earth-honoring (47).

Ed McGaa’s (2004) writing has echoes of this split although he makes his points from a Native American point of view. He arguments are often scathing criticisms of “Dominant Society’s” treatment of nature. While acknowledging a number of inter-related factors; population growth, greed, the resource heavy western way of life (262, 255, 273) his main contention is that we have lost our spiritual ties to nature. And while a number of factors do drive this lost connection, it is his contention that the western faiths have failed to teach people the value of that bond. As I will argue in later sections, McGaa suggests that people turn to their religious leaders to solve societal problems. The church, he continues, has been largely silent on environmental issues. This silence amounts to complicity, as Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel proclaimed, “indifference is worse than evil” (McGaa, 184).

According to Rubin, (1995) Berry further suggests that Christianity’s view of the world as a “one-time emerging process” has turned the Earth into a “wasteworld” (7). This is in contrast to the cyclical vision of paganism. This linear thinking closed our
thinking to the pagan traditions and opened the door to technology and scientific thought, which Berry argues is destroying the planet (Rubin, 7).

Gardner (2003) suggests that environmentalists might seek to cultivate their own spirituality. Perhaps what is needed is an effort to create “an emotional/spiritual connection between the public and the natural environment” (no page). Stephen Gould argued that we need to forge “an emotional bond between ourselves and nature as well - for we will not fight to save what we do not love” (Gardner, no page). Others share this sentiment.

David Orr calls on scientists to bring emotion to their work. He notes that most biologists and ecologists “believe that cold rationality, fearless objectivity, and a bit of technology” will get humanity out of its environmental predicament. But those tools have long been used with minimal success. What is missing, Orr unabashedly asserts, is love. "Why is it so hard to talk about love, the most powerful of human emotions, in relation to science, the most powerful and far-reaching of human activities?" He notes that passion and good science, far from being antithetical, are as interdependent as the heart and the brain. Both are needed if we are to fully understand our world and our role in it (Gardner, 2003, no page).

Another issue that arises and perhaps best fits into the question of Paganism is a supposed suspicion of nature. Numerous writers (Motavalli, 2002, Kaufman, 2001 & Hoffman, 2000) have cited a fear among the religious community of nature worship. How widespread this is remains unclear, but there is a contingent in the Christian community, which equates environmentalism with paganism and the worship of nature.
This has, unsurprisingly, been a barrier to building partnerships between the two groups. I will return to this matter in my discussion of the *Religious Dissenters*.

As I stated in the opening sections, there is not a consensus that religion is to blame for our current environmental problems. There are those who feel religion has been indifferent and that religious teachings are ambiguous on the matter. Still others feel that religion has much of value that it can provide the environmental movement, because it teaches a love of God’s creation.

**In Defense of Religion –**

It will be stated throughout this discussion that there is not consensus on the relationship between religion and the environment. This is true of what role religion has played in the current troubles and what role it should play moving forward. Arguments exist on both sides. I have thus far discussed primarily those who argue that religion has been instrumental in environmental destruction. But as Stuhr (1973) notes there is an emerging school, which argues that “the Judeo-Christian tradition does not, in fact, encourage exploitation of world’s riches and beauty” (69).

In this spirit, I will now offer the arguments on the other end of the debate; those who contend religion instructs us to adopt an ethic of creation care (for example, Wieskel 1997 and Gendler, 1997). Or those who (Gottlieb, as noted above, and McDaniel, 1997, for example) are ambivalent in their evaluations. I will present the perspective of those who claim that situations and context are equally important (for example, Stuhr, 1973).
Perhaps the most compelling argument in defense of religion is the state of the environment in those cultures that are considered environmentally sensitive. The question of Hinduism in India comes to mind. Motavalli (2002) argues that while “Hinduism expresses a reverence for nature, imbuing rivers, forests and mountains with divine significance, India today is in its worst environmental crisis” (no page). Hindus point not to religions as the cause, rather they state that economic development has “come at severe environmental cost” (no page). The head of the Indian Institute of Ecology and the Environment argues that the Vedas instruct people how to protect nature. What is needed is leaders trained in religion, culture and the environment (no page).

It is unlikely that such an open call for leaders to engage religion will be accepted in the United States. But the lesson, as we shall learn in this section, has been echoed by many authors. It is development without conscience and ethics that has led to our situation, not religion. My own opinion is more nuanced. I accept that religion has a role to play in alleviating environmental problems. It must said that it probably has some culpability too.

Rasmussen (1992) concedes that perhaps Christianity is deserving of White’s criticism. He argues, however, that the Bible can also give something positive, that in fact it is “a story of hope, of the possibilities open for free humans to serve God and free nature and humankind from oppression” (address to the Conference on Human Values and the Environment).

Not all commentators share Rasmussen’s views. Greeley (1993) concludes that what is more important is to consider “what kind of religion one uses to predict
environmental concern” (23). His findings suggest that non-Christians, Catholics and political liberals are more likely to support environmental spending (23). He argues that it is not the Bible which causes low support of the environmental. Instead, he states that those with a “rigid style” resist environmental concerns and use the Bible as a pretext for their attitudes (27).

This echoes Wilkinson (1980) who states that it is not the question of whether religion is at fault, but rather how people have chosen to use it (104). This is an idea that I will return at various points in this study. Questions of social or environmental justice certainly demonstrate this point. As Gardner (2003) notes, religions have long taught about the “spiritual corruption associated with excessive attachment to wealth or material accumulation” (no page). In spite of these teachings, religious institutions have failed to address consumerism or promote simple living (Gardner, no page). And efforts that have been made have experienced modest success. According to Gardner, “religion in industrial countries is struggling in its efforts to counter the consumerist tide” (no page).

While we should acknowledge this disconnect between “theories and practices”, this should “not lessen our endeavor to identify resources from within the world’s religion’s for a more ecologically sound cosmology” (Tucker & Williams, 1997, xx). The authors note that this disjunction is present in all religions. Rather than letting this stand in the way of developing ecotheology, it is “our task to explore these conceptual resources so as to broaden and expand our own perspectives in challenging and fruitful ways” (xx).
McDaniel (1997) for example sees religion’s crime as one of omission rather than commission. He states that the “classical spiritual traditions” have not encouraged environmental stewardship or sensitivity (107), a sentiment echoed by others. Jakowoska (1986) for example, concludes there is indeed a biblical mandate for stewardship and churches have always been committed to this goal. Yet, she acknowledges that perhaps this commitment has been in theory, rather than in practice (131).

Wieskel (1997) also disagrees with White’s thesis. It is his contention that: the Judeo-Christian tradition is more complex than one might think at first glance, allowing for, or indeed perhaps even encouraging, a far more ecologically sustainable approach to the environment than heretofore recognized (23). Similarly, Stuhr (1973) turned to the thoughts of theologian Michael Hamilton, who contended that “our religious heritage brings considerable insight to bear on the problems engendered by man’s carelessness and technology’s power” (69).

Hill’s (1998) discussion is a comprehension analysis of many of the points made by White. He, Hill, examines the stewardship-dominion debate, looks at human-nature dualism and ultimately concludes that “if creation theology has been used as a justification for ‘mastering the world’, it has been done only by distorting the original meaning of the Hebrew texts” (42). Hill explores both Christian and Jewish theology. While much of his discussion on stewardship and dominion is based on Hebrew theology, he does suggest that the Christian teachings, which developed from the Hebrew texts, similarly did not take the “notion of dominion to mean ‘domination’” (42).
So, I will use his conclusions of Hebrew and Christian texts interchangeably. Let us look at the rationale for his conclusion.

On the question of stewardship and dominion in Jewish tradition, Hill (1998) begins with the notion that humans were created in the image of God. The implication, he contends, is that humans are “crowned” as kings and queens to represent God in creation (38). This does not, however, give them permission to use nature as they deem appropriate. In the Hebrew tradition, kings and queens “were expected to represent God’s powerful leadership justly and honorably” (38).

So, continues Hill, humans were “created to act nobly in the place of the Creator” (38). If rulers are no longer able to ensure the well-being of those that have been entrusted to them “they are no longer authentic leaders and must forfeit dominion” (38).

Speaking of the second Genesis story, Hill describes it as a “more ‘earthy’” and in this telling, Adam is “an earth man” (39). This Adam, made out of mud, is “forever linked to the other creatures of the earth” (39). Since humans were created from the earth, they belong not only to the gods\(^1\), but to the earth also. Humans originate with the gods, but their material self comes from the earth.

This second, more earthy creation story also dispels the mind/body dichotomy. Humans come to be living beings through the “breath of life”. Hill suggests that since there is not mention of the soul there is no grounds to assume that the spiritual is more important than the material. In this story, there is no basis for a mind-body dichotomy. God is concerned with humans in totality, mind and body (39). Hill therefore, concludes

\(^{1}\) Hill use the term gods, not God, because the story was originally written in BCE, when there were many not one God.
that “exploitative interpretation of ‘dominion’ seem to be largely a modern phenomenon” (42). This is of course a question that, as the literature suggest, is still unsettled. But it does lead to another important question, that of context.

I think that it is important to understand the context in which religious texts were written and current conditions in which they exist. While considering the culpability of religion in the environmental crisis, two issues should be noted. The first is that religious texts were penned in times very different from ours. And furthermore, religions are dynamic and evolve with changing situations.

Others have recognized that the prevailing conditions in which religious texts are written is an important consideration. da Silva (1998) cautions that the Buddha’s discourses were written at a time when environmental concerns were “not live concerns” (18). Thus, in reading these texts we must employ both imagination and effort. Furthermore, we will need “an acquaintance with the contextual implications” of the discourses (18). I think that da Silva’s observations are applicable to Christianity and its scriptures.

Similarly, Hoffman (2000) reminds us that “the context for the Biblical verses at which White leveled his criticisms is fundamentally different” (119 - 120). Our technological and social structures threaten various eco-systems; these conditions were not historically true. Hoffman continues, "using the commons as a cesspool does not harm the general public under frontier conditions, because there is no public; the same behavior in a metropolis is unbearable" (119 – 120). With this perspective it is perhaps understandable that the authors of the Bible were indifferent to environmental concerns or even accepted a dominion view of the world.
Jakowska (1986) poses four questions in her attempt to evaluate both “content and the effectiveness” of the Catholic Church’s environmental ethics (127). While her’s is a case study of the Catholic Church in Latin America, it is instructive, because it considers not only what is written, but the context in which it is used, in this case the conditions in the Dominican Republic. For the purpose of this discussion, I consider just two of her of questions: “Can environmental ethics be derived from the religious beliefs” (127)? She was interested only in people of Hispanic heritage in Latin America, but I think the question is applicable of Roman Catholicism in general. And, “does the Roman Catholic Church of today offer clear guidelines as to the human use of natural resources” (131)?

Considering the first, Jakowoska (1986) defends religion, noting that while many people claim to be Christians, the vast majority are in fact ignorant of the nuances of the scriptures. This lack of detailed knowledge has caused people to overlook the “environmental implications” of those writings (128). Those with this deeper appreciation, she claims, understand that the Bible does not justify indifference or arrogance toward nature. She therefore places blame elsewhere. Perhaps, she suggests, the fault is not in the Bible but in human’s interpretation thereof (128).

To this argument we must add the failure of humans to act in accord with their religious beliefs. Dewitt (1997) reminds us that humans, “even while piously professing beliefs, may go astray as individuals, families, communities, and nations” (90). Importantly, though, he notes that we are open to “get back on course” (90). Birkeland (1993) is slightly less optimist. She makes a similar argument, stating that “spirituality, belief systems, or world views do not necessarily improve individual behavior”. She
argues that behavior is the result of a number of factors, not just our beliefs. And hence, there exists “a gap between what people believe and what they will do to get their own way” (47 – 49).

Jakowska (1986) further argues that the dominion phrases are taken out of context and other passages, which charge humans with stewardship, are overlooked (128). She states that humans are superior to nature, but it is a “conditioned superiority” (128). Humans are thus responsible for using natural resources appropriately and with care. She credits the Israelites with “some ‘ecological awareness’” since they knew that their existence depended on the water, soil, trees and seasons. She continues, noting that both the Israelites and Romans used “natural metaphors as spiritual symbols” so we see that “happy the man who…is like a tree” (129). She also points to the Hebrew festivals of thanksgiving for fall and spring harvest. I think that her points echo those of Fink (1998). Speaking of the historical Jewish link to the environment, Fink (1998) argues that ecology was never a “discrete area of inquiry”. Instead, matters of the environment were addressed incidentally, as they arose.

I, however, am not convinced that this points to an environmental ethic and in particular one driven by religion. I will accept that the man-tree metaphor suggests a positive human relationship to nature. While I appreciate the value of describing nature in positive terms and it is probably a good first step to valuing nature I am not sure that it is in itself sufficient. Furthermore, it is not clear that this is religiously driven and neither does it guarantee that people will act in environmentally sound ways.

Are the scriptures promoting this bond or merely reflecting the thought of the time? The other arguments however do not convince me of an environmental ethic. Are
contemporary Catholics not dependent on the soil and air and water for their survival? Yet, I can hardly credit them with possessing, for the most part, an ecological awareness. And this with technical and scientific knowledge that far exceeds that of the ancient people she cites. Her contention that harvest festivals imply an environmental ethic is equally dubious. Contemporary Americans celebrate such festivals and I cannot say that they are models of environmental ethics.

In contrast to Jakowska is LaBar (1986) who is concerned not with how people have interpreted and use biblical teachings, but what the Bible says. While I think that it is equally important to understand both, he gives some insight into how nature is valued in Biblical writings. From his analysis, he concludes that Christians, in their use of nature, must act as moral agents. And furthermore, that nature “has great value” (90). From where do these pronouncements come? His analysis of the values of nature presented, or absent, in the Bible and the moral considerability of nature.

LaBar (1986) points to ten potential values: Economic, life support, recreational, scientific, aesthetic, life, diversity and unity, stability and spontaneity, dialectical and sacramental. Citing Biblical examples LaBar concludes the following: The writers of the Bible understood that there was economic value in nature and argues that “the writers of the Bible seem to have believed that the wise use of natural resources may include their refinement by technology” (79).

If this is indeed understood as a Biblical reference for the smart use of resources, I suggest that it is important to understand this in the current context. What smart use might mean to a small group of ancient, nomadic Israelites is, I posit, very different from what it should mean to over 6 billion humans. LaBar (1986) in fact makes this same
observation, stating that our current dominion, as LaBar terms our interactions with nature, is much greater than that of Biblical times. In comparing our current practices and those of, say ancient Israelites, it is important to recognize that there are more people, more widely distributed, with more knowledge and using more natural resources than in Biblical times (90). Certainly, these are issues that any reading of the Bible and any discussion of the stewardship/dominion argument must consider.

Another of the values LaBar (1986) indicates is life support, which he concludes is the most cited value in the Bible. Biblical culture was one, which “did not take food for granted” (79). He then adds, rightly, I think, that in this regard our culture is aberrant. The writers were aware not only of nature’s food-giving value, but of things such as rain for the crops, the moon as a marker for the seasons and plants for shade (79). While this is certainly all true it is unclear whether this is merely a description of the times or a biblical mandate to protect nature.

The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) bases its environmental ethics on scripture. The group is confident that according to the Bible "the environment is actually a part of God's creation - of which humanity is also a part" (Scripture, 2009, no page). They further argue that “the Bible teaches that both "nature" or "the environment" and humanity are part of creation. Both are inextricably linked to one another, have been ever since God formed us from the earth" (no page). Given this interconnectedness between humanity and nature we are called to protect both humans and nature. EEN’s notion of creation-care is “a holistic ethic” (no page). The EEN bases creation-care on Jesus’ relationship to nature. Thus, if “the Bible teaches us that Christ has created the universe, gives it life and sustains it” people should look at in a like fashion (no page).
The network provides a substantial list of scriptural references to support the idea of creation-care. As I have stated, I am not convinced that religious people have always read their scriptures as calling them to care for nature. However, it is a positive step that religious people and institutions are now beginning to see stewardship implications in their scriptures. Here are just a few of the examples the EEN cites: Lev. 25:23 - "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." Or Micah 6:1-4, 7-8 - "Listen to what the LORD says: 'Stand up, plead your case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. Hear, O mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. And finally, Gen. 9:8-17: 9 - "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you - the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you - every living creature on earth.

The connection is also made between pollution and its effects on people. The EEN elaborates that the poor, the elderly and children inordinately bear problems such as water and air pollution. It is a valid argument for social justice. All of which begs the question: if the Bible is this explicit in calling for care of people and nature, have people simply misread the scriptures or have they chosen to ignore the teachings of their faith?

Despite this obvious disconnect between what EEN claims the Bible instructs and how people have acted, I think that the EEN’s involvement in faith-based efforts is particularly important as it provides a more conservative perspective than more liberal mainline Protestant denominations or groups. This may be necessary to attract people...
of similar persuasions who may be distrustful of what they consider the liberal churches and of secular scientists and environmental groups.

As Bakken (1999) notes, “there is a 'strand of conspiracy theory' among some conservative Christians” which associates “environmentalism with a 'new world order and socialism'” (cited in Robotham, 1999a, no page). And there are the charges that faith-based initiatives are akin to earth worship and paganism. In contrast, the people of EEN are not “a bunch of renegade liberals” (Bakken, in Robotham, 1999a, no page). They are socially conservative but are concerned with environmental preservation. What is needed is the ability to get people to look at scripture and understand what it says about creation care. It is not hard to imagine that a conservative-minded individual would be swayed by a like-minded priest than, say, by Greenpeace. Given this suspicion, noted above, it is possible that groups such as Greenpeace might be equated with pagans and nature worshippers.

Mahan, (2001) argues that people act in unsustainable ways out of ignorance, rather than malice. And much like the EEN, he finds numerous examples in the Bible, which call for us to act as stewards (no page). Among the arguments made by Mahan; we are to protect nature, we should be ecologists and we must forsake materialism (no page).

Mahan uses the second Genesis creation story to demonstrate the first point. To highlight the second point he directs us to Job 12:7-8. There we read, “But ask the animals what they think - let them teach you; let the birds of the air tell you what's going on. Put your ear to the earth - learn the basics. Listen - the fish in the ocean will tell you their stories” (no page). This tells us to learn about the Earth and how the various
species play a part. Finally, Mahan refers to James 5, which admonishes the “arrogant rich” who "have looted the Earth and lived it up” (no page).

Again, it must be noted that people have not necessarily adhered to these principles. It does nonetheless demonstrate that the Bible can be a source of positive environmental messages. Mahan’s examples are also notable because at the Au Sable Institute they put the principles in practice. For example, one of the ecological messages he reads in the Bible is the duty to “maintain the natural fruitfulness of this world” that is to live sustainably (no page). To apply this belief and “encourage local sustainability” the Institute offers a limnology course. Each semester the class studies the water of a local lake. Recommendations are made on how to improve or maintain the quality of the lake (no page).

There are a host of reasons presented to refute, or at least challenge, White’s thesis. One contention is that there are consequences of not following a model of servant-hood. This purported fear of some negative outcome would have prevented humans from abusing nature, or so the argument goes. Some (Granberg-Michaelson, 1989) point to Ezekiel 34:2, which instructs us that when people fail in their duties as stewards – in this case to protect their sheep – bad things happen (10).

Fink (1998) makes a similar argument suggesting that we become less than animals when we fail to protect nature. He points to the contemporary idea that if we destroy the earth through nuclear weapons, cockroaches will become our masters. This is certainly an interesting argument. Yet, one must ask whether these threats have served as a deterrent. I would argue they have not. If the threat of being ruled by cockroaches has not deterred us from nuclear proliferation, would the threat of being
below the animals have encouraged stewardship in our predecessors? Again, it would appear to me that the answer is no.

Yet another argument raised by those who argue that religion promoted a stewardship ethic is the relationship to the creator expressed through the treatment of the creation. As eco-theologian Calvin DeWitt (1997) argues, the ruin of nature or Creation is a reflection of how one relates to the Creator (65). Thus, people of faith who act with disregard for nature are implicitly disrespecting their god. Such a line of reasoning would certainly appear to support a stewardship approach.

But as with Fink (1998) and Jakowska’s (1986) arguments noted above it is not clear that people have considered what their abuse of nature says about their relationship to god. Furthermore, the dominion position assumes that God offered nature to humans to use as we saw fit. In this scenario, there would be no conflict. If the earth were given to humans by God to use as they see fit, then any abuse can be assumed to be in line with God’s will. Or at lease she/he is ambivalent. This issue is never addressed by those who offer the relation to the creator argument.

In addition to honoring the creator, those who support the stewardship approach are moving away from the dominion phrase and turning to numerous passages in the Bible where God acted as steward. For example, Fowler notes the “Noachic covenant, which demonstrates God’s commitment to all life. In several passages, (in Job for example) God admires or honors nature (Fowler, 40). This is taken still further by those who argue that people are made in God’s image and therefore have “special responsibilities” among which is the protection of the Creation. Barnette (1972) and Nash (1989) point to Genesis, although not the much contested 1:28. Instead, both
Barnette and Nash consider Genesis 2:15, wherein God placed man in the Garden with the command to “till and keep it” (29 & 96).

Discussing the Jewish tradition, Fink (1998) makes the same point. Fink points to this second Genesis quote, often cited in the stewardship/dominion debate. In Genesis 2: 4-15 humans’ link to nature is illustrated, contends Fink (no page). According to this second account, humans were placed in the garden to work it and watch over it. This, argues Fink,” characterizes the land as God’s property, not ours” (no page). Thus, we are guardians or stewards of God’s creation.

While I accept that these arguments suggest that the Bible can be read to support environmental ethics I am not convinced that the Bible has always been read as such. I think that these arguments reflect a contemporary awareness and concern with religion and its role in environmental protection. I think that it is important to highlight that the Bible can be seen to value nature. I think, however, that it is equally important to recognize that it has not always been understood in that light.

Various writers (for example Diamond, 2005, Cobb, 1972, Zaidi, 1986 & Gross, 1997) raise an important objection to White’s thesis. Each author notes cultures that are more explicitly environmentally conscience and who have nonetheless failed to prevent environmental destruction. This apparent disregard for religious teachings is an important one. As Wilkinson (1980) states, it is not the question of whether religion is at fault, but rather how people have chosen to use it (104). I have already noted the case made by Diamond (2005) pointing to environmental abuse in past and present Japan. This is an apparent affront to a religion concerned with the environment and respect for life.
Zaidi (1986) makes similar claims. In his critique of White’s essay Zaidi points out that even in cultures where nature is viewed as sacred, humans have disregarded their environmental ethics. He presents the example of ancient China, which preached a philosophy of harmony between man and nature and violated that ethic (111).

While I think that there is some merit to White’s arguments, I think that these writers raise an important point. There is almost certainly something else afoot and it is perhaps the most compelling argument in defense of religion. Many a writer lays blame not at religion’s door, but rather blames unchecked consumerism. This idea of economic growth as a culprit has a number of adherents. Perhaps the more accurate criticism is a combination of consumerism unchecked by religion.

Much of this argument is predicated on the idea of an “economic faith”, mass consumption and the schism between religion and science beginning during the enlightenment. From this schism, came the idea that development was associated almost exclusively with material well-being, to the exclusion of spiritual development (Gardner, 2002, 9). Gardner posits that what developed was an “economic faith” that might challenge religion in its power to shape worldviews. Whereas religions are concerned with questions of love and enlightenment, economic faith champions consumption to the exclusion of more profound questions (9).

Continuing, Gardner (2002) purports that science slowly usurped religion as “the authoritative source for some of humanity’s most profound questions” (8). Science was focused on answering, “what is” questions rather than “what ought to be” (8) and the result was that science, unrestrained by ethics “helped to deliver the most violent and environmentally damaging century in human history” (8 – 9).
Gruen, (1993) makes a similar claim. He claims that the scientific revolution saw a rise in empirical thought. This rise of a ‘mechanistic world view’ combined with the experimental method allowed for the “manipulation of animals and nature” (64).

In a related line of thought, Hill (1998) points to a combination of secularization and the drive for autonomy embodied in capitalism. Secularization has reduced nature to a commodity. The economic system “becomes a law unto itself” and “God is simply not relevant to contemporary concerns” (27). Hill further argues, in line with the other authors, that under this combined system of capitalism and secularization, religion has little role to play in “economics, politics, industry and technology” and that “profit is often the driving force” (27).

Other authors have noted the damage our current economic system has wreaked. Similar to Hill’s arguments, Nelson (1995) suggests that our current economic system regards nature as a “factor of production” (148). The fault, contends Nelson, is not religious, it is economic. The thought that we can “redo the creation, would have been declared heresy 500 years ago” (149). And the sacredness of nature was not left in antiquity, it remains in Protestant thought, claims Nelson. The treatment of nature as a commodity is offensive to a number of religious traditions (148). If this is true, how have we arrived at the current environmental difficulties?

According to Nelson, traditional economics, as opposed to the emerging school of environmental economics (135), are the enemy of the environment (149). This is problematic because economics are often the language of policy debates (135). Numerous agencies, for example the Congressional Budget Office and the World Bank, have economists on their policy staffs, where these individuals can influence policy
decisions. And contrary to the authors already noted, Nelson views economics and not science as problematic in sustainability efforts (136).

Economics has become a hindrance to sustainability, because of the values inherent in the discipline. While Nelson acknowledges that economists are not monolithic in their views, there is a value system in place, which lends itself to a certain way of thinking and of valuing nature (136). This thinking tends towards economic efficiency and a growth ethic (135). Furthermore, economic principles embrace the idea of substitutability (138). Thus, no species of ecosystem is “priceless” because should it disappear humans will find an acceptable substitute (138).

Nelson concludes that economists have, in fact created a secular religion (143). They might be considered the “priesthood” of the “religion of growth” (143). This ideology, he argues, is at odds with or even offensive to much religious traditions (143 and 148). Protestants, beginning with Calvin and continuing to the present, considered nature a “cathedral of sorts” (148). And subsequently, Nelson concludes, that to destroy wilderness is to deface a church (149).

Feldman and Moseley (2002) agree with the notion that White’s article spurred debate within the religious community (5). They suggest that most religious leaders have rejected the White hypothesis pointing instead to human failures as the cause of the environmental crisis. In this view, it is “human arrogance, ignorance and greed” that have been the cause of the environmental problems (5). More pointedly, the authors present the idea that among religious leaders there is a belief that “the quest for increasingly more wealth, status and material possessions, without considering the impact of this quest on others, has led to environmental degradation” (5). This is
certainly a valid point, but it can be argued that even in this context religion has been complicit. Gardner (2003) makes just this point.

Gardner (2003) concedes that religious institutions have a history of teachings on the ills of “excessive attachment to wealth or material accumulation” (no page). Despite these teachings, the churches in industrial nations have “largely failed to address the consumerist engine that drives industrial economies” (no page). Both Pope John Paul II and Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, have attempted to dampen the effects of consumerism. Despite these good intentions, Gardner argues that the church is struggling to counter consumerism in industrial nations (no page).

In a similar line of thinking Diamond (2005) suggests that perhaps it is not religious teachings that are at fault, but our unwillingness to abandon any given way of life. While this may be religious or secular, he notes that “religious values tend to be especially deeply held” and as a result have been the cause of catastrophic environmental collapses. He points to two such cases.

The Easter Island community, for example, destroyed the island’s forests for religious reasons. Timber was needed to transport and erect the giant statues. Or in the case of the Greenland Norse, who clung to their Christian religious values in an environment not appropriate to that way for life. As Diamond states, “those admirable…traits also prevented them from making the drastic lifestyle changes and selective adoptions of Inuit technology that might have helped them survive for longer…In trying to carry on as Christian farmers, the Greenland Norse in effect were deciding that they were prepared to die as Christian farmers rather than live an as Inuit”
If one accepts this line of reasoning then it becomes critical to have the religious voice in the environmental movement.

It is also important to acknowledge that people have, for time immemorial, altered their natural surroundings. While the Easter Island community had catastrophic results and arguably we are currently on the same path, this is not always the case. What is important to note is that “pristine” settings are extremely rare. Moran (2006) points to the ruins of Central America and the surrounding old growth forest. It is now understood that as much as 75% of the landscape was once cultivated (57).

And there is ample evidence of more destructive practices. Archeology documents the mass extinction of birds at the hands of Polynesian colonizers. Or deforestation of Mayan lowlands, or soil erosion in Ancient Greece (Moran, 2006, 60). Contemporaneously we find Californians building homes in fire-prone areas and those in the arid southwest creating landscapes with plants from humid areas.

Moran’s point is that we create environments that are both productive and familiar to us (58). I introduce it to demonstrate that people have long affected the natural world, and many of these peoples either predated Christianity or did not adhere to Christian teachings. But his points are interesting. He cites a variety of examples of peoples destroying their natural surroundings. He suggests that the outcomes were the result of a misreading of the environment (61), as an example he notes the people of Easter Island.

The response, historically, has been for the offending party to simply abandon the now depleted area for more productive lands (64). It took the Anasazi of the United States southwest a short two centuries to deforest the area, erode the soils and finally
abandon the region (64). Given the global scope of the current environmental crisis abandonment is clearly not an option.

It has also been asserted that our infatuation with technology has led us to the current crisis. While not addressing the role of religion, Dustin, McAvoy & Schultz (2002) suggest that we are suffering from a moral breakdown (41). This is a result of an “engrossment with the fabrication of machines” (41). We have, they argue, become enchanted with technology, but do not know how to put it to good use. The consequence has been the exploitation for both people and nature (42).

I claimed in the opening remarks that churches, at least local churches, act in accord with the prevailing social attitudes. It is certainly a possible factor in church involvement, or lack thereof, in environmental programs. I will argue in subsequent sections that much of the discourse on eco-theology is to be found in the upper levels of church hierarchy. What might be the reason that the local churches have not embraced the ideas of faith based stewardship, especially given the fact that their leaders are promoting the idea?

A number of authors (for example Djupe & Gilbert and Clinebell) address the impacts the community has on clergy actions. Djupe and Gilbert’s (2002) research was concerned not with the congregations, but with the surrounding communities. They note that clergy “live in communities with distinctive political and social traits” and that these traits potentially carry ramifications. The authors found that “congregations play a central role” in determining the clergy’s public speech (599). Clergy speech is affected by both the approval of the congregation and the need to represent the congregation in the community (599).
While Djupe and Gilbert looked at the surrounding communities, Clinebell was more concerned with the relationship between clergy and congregation. To affect change the clergy “needs allies in his constituency” (Clinebell, 1970, no page). Clinebell argues that as a theological leader he or she should not pursue a mission without the support of, at least some, of those he or she leads. From a practical standpoint, it is unwise to do so. Clinebell concludes that “a clergyman who cannot involve some of his people in a task force with himself is probably slated either for ineffectiveness or dismissal” (no page).

Add to this, the fact there seems to be some disconnect between the clergy and the congregation. According to Greenberg, (2000) mainline Protestant denominations have not embraced their political role because of tensions between the leaders and members. From her research Greenberg found that the clergy tend to be more “ideologically committed” and that the clergy are sometimes “a little more liberal, more aware of the social issues than some of the parishioners” (384). And given Campbell and Pettigrew’s (in Djupe and Gilbert, 2002) findings that the clergy’s political activity is most heavily influenced by their congregations it would not be surprising that clergy would not voice these more liberal views. This conformity with the congregation ensures “a comfortable work environment, the continued flow of funds…and the safety of the clergy’s job” (605).

Given the importance of the congregation’s opinions, it is relevant to ask what are the public’s views on environmental issues? A thorough examination of this question is, however, beyond the scope of this study. I think that some brief insights are necessary. While I am concerned only with Christianity, it is notable that other religions
are addressing these questions also. Referring to the Pew research cited above, it is interesting to note the opinions of non-Christian faiths. The groups most supportive of stricter environmental regulations were all non-Christian. Jewish and Buddhists adherents top the list with 77% and 75% respectively stating that stricter environmental laws are worth the costs (U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2004, no page). Muslim and Hindu follow with 69% and 67%. The Christian denominations, however, hover around the 60% mark, with the mainline Protestants showing the highest support with 64%.

The Pew study also tracked changes in attitudes over a 14 year period. Over this period there was a one percentage gain in support for stricter environmental regulations. Not all denominations however followed this trend. Catholics and mainline Protestants had the largest gains; both had four percentage increases in support for stricter regulations. Interestingly, several denominations had equal changes, but for less regulations. These denominations were Jewish, Black Protestant and the Unaffiliated (U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2004, no page).

The question of social justice will be mentioned throughout this work. Given the impacts of poor environmental quality on minorities and the poor, it is particularly interesting to consider how these communities have responded to environmental problems. Vincent Leggett (Lutz, 2006, no page), executive director of Blacks for the Chesapeake, claims, “African-American churches, especially in urban areas, have always been involved with environmental issues” (Lutz, no page). That African Americans are not concerned with environment issues is a myth, says Leggett.
Leggett further contends that rural, African American churches are similarly concerned with environmental issues. The problem is that they "don’t know where to move with those concerns" (Lutz). This might be a result of a lack of knowledge of environmental regulations or policy. Or it might reflect the lack of non-governmental agency, other than the church, in African American communities. As a result, they focus, instead on more pressing matters, such housing and education. Leggett believes that through their churches people can address both social justice concerns and environmental destruction, which are often times interconnected.

An interesting point has been raised about the social justice movement. Moran (2006) argues that social justice has been “a topic of interest for several years” (33) and that this interest is cross-disciplinary. But, he continues, little is known about the movement since it is largely “invisible to academics” since most of those involved with social justice issues are pre-occupied with practical matters and not involved in academic endeavors (33).

The case of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) is an interesting one. Gowans and Caparo (2003) argue that followers of the Church of Latter-Day Saints are admonished to adhere to sound environmental practices. The authors state that the church’s teachings “support and even demand a strong environmental ethic”. A belief founded on the “inherent value of all souls” (375).

Gowans and Caparo suggest that a key difference in Mormon faith and mainstream Christianity is the idea of the soul. According to Gowans and Caparo mainstream Christianity maintains that humans are the only creatures that have souls. In contrast, the Latter-Day Saints see “a world filled with souls, many of them
nonhuman... Latter-Day Saint leaders have concluded that such ensouled beings, our fellow creatures, deserve moral considerability” (377). This is environmentally significant because it implies that the universal resurrection applies to all Creation (278-379). Gowans and Caparo acknowledge that this doctrine implies impartiality in the eyes of God, but has thus far not become dogmatic within Mormonism or Christianity in general (379).

The Latter-Day Saints present a divergent, but important contribution to eco-theology, argue Gowans and Caparo. As opposed to other schools of thought, Mormons do not distinguish species on intelligence. Instead, they posit that the difference between humans and other species is moral agency. Our ability to know right from wrong makes us accountable (380-381).

Terry Tempest Williams, is another Mormon commentator who speaks eloquently of faith and the environment. She asks, "how it is we have come to this place in our society where art and nature are spoke in terms of what is optional, the pastime and concern of the elite?" (2000, no page).

There is some debate on where the issue of animal rights falls in the environmental movement, if at all. That is assuredly a question for another project. For the purposes of this study, I will assume the protection of animals to be one part of the larger environmental movement. Scully (2002) tackles the question of religion and stewardship with regards to animal suffering. It is a question, I think, that has some bearing on this study. Scully asks: How can we sing the praises of God while abusing and debasing his creatures (20). He further suggests that among the values propounded by Christianity is kindness to animals.
Scully (2003) focuses on the treatment of animals and how this reflects Christian beliefs. Scully points to a number of Christian thinkers (C.S. Lewis and Billy Graham among them) who maintain that when “the Lord comes to collect his own” among that number will be a few “furry friends” (19 – 20). He takes this as a reason to show concern for all creation. We can assume that God will care for these creatures and that we should be “His instrument in loving concern for all creation” (19 – 20).

He simply concludes that “no religion gives sanction to the abuses we permit”. And the moral codes, which do not permit these abuses are “overlooked, or merely tolerated, or dismissed as unworthy of serious attention” (20). In his view we have simply run out of excuses. Approaching the issue from a slightly different perspective, Terry Tempest Williams, referring to the plight of the prairie dog, states that “if we can extend our idea of community to include the lowliest of creatures, call them 'the untouchables', then we will indeed be closer to a path of peace and tolerance” And she continues that “if we cannot accommodate 'the other'” we will face “our own species' extended winter of the soul” (2010, no page).

Certainly, the current environmental situations put religions in an unprecedented position. Yet, Gross (1997) is hopeful that they can adopt environmental ethics. Gross argues that in order to remain relevant, religions have historically adapted to changing conditions. There is no reason, she continues, that the same cannot be true of the environmental crisis (334).

From these arguments, I would conclude the following: Lynn White’s assertions were correct, albeit incomplete. My feeling is that the arguments presented in this
section address the more complete range of issues, as noted by Lewis Moncrief. In a rebuttal to White’s arguments, Moncrief (1970) envisioned “an alternative set of hypotheses based on cultural variables” (509). Historically he points to the French and Industrial Revolutions and the growing affluence they created. As a consequence there was an increased demand for goods and the byproducts have been waste and pollution (510).

In the American context, Moncrief argues that the untamed natural frontier was seen as an obstacle to be controlled and overcome (510). He, in fact, pointed to America as the “archetype of what happens when democracy, technology, urbanization, capitalistic mission, and antagonism (or apathy) toward the natural environment are blended together” (510). In this setting there are three barriers to resolving the environmental problems: lack of a moral incentive to do so; the failure of social institutions to adjust to the crises and blind faith in technology (510).

Finally, Moncrief concludes that the forces of technological advancement, urbanization, democracy, the accumulation of wealth, combined with “an aggressive attitude toward nature” are more likely causes of the environmental crisis. The role of the Judeo-Christian tradition has probably been its influence in shaping the character of each of these factors (511).

**Non-Christian Perspectives –**

This discussion is perhaps best included in an examination of future research possibilities. I include here to highlight that the question of faith and the environment is not a purely Christian matter. This is indeed a multi-faith, global concern. In a number of
cases, (for example the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) we see interfaith cooperation.

Carroll, Brockelman & Westfall (1997), suggest that traditional Jewish theology has always supported an environmentally …responsible way of life. In Jewish thought the “good life” is not one based on material consumption, but living an ecologically sound and appreciative life (64). Rabbi Everett Gendler (1997) is of a similar mind. Gendler refers not to the stewardship/dominion question, but to what he calls a divine covenant. According to the Rabbi it “fairly insists” that our relationship with the earth and “its life be taken with utmost seriousness” (69), that we have a pact with God to protect his Creation.

The Harvard Conferences are a fine example of faith-based ecology in non-Christian faiths. The series of conferences took place between 1996 and 1998. In addition to the Christian and Jewish editions cited throughout this work, the conferences generated works on ecology in the Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu and Islamic traditions (Religions of the World and Ecology).

I have already introduced a number of Jewish perspectives on faith and religion. As with Christianity, there is not consensus on what Judaism has preached on people’s relationship to nature. Perhaps the most telling argument comes from Daniel Fink (1998) who claims that until recently environmental concerns were only incidental to the Jewish community.

Simcha Bunam points to the maxim of two truths. The earth ethic realizes that humanity has the ability to use nature for our benefit. At the same time, we are to remember that creation has its own intrinsic value (Fink, no page). Finally, it is
highlighted that the great Jewish philosopher Maimonides reminds us that each day God stated, “it was good”. This praise was not reserved for humans. Maimonides concluded that, “All the other beings have been created for their own sakes and not for the sake of something else, for example humanity” (Fink, no page).

There are others in the Jewish community who dispute White’s thesis and do not see the ambiguity, which Fink purports. Swartz (1995) points to a number of Jewish textual examples, which suggest a long-standing ethic of stewardship. He claims that while the Israelites tamed the land and made it productive they remembered that God was sovereign and acknowledge his ownership. Specifically, Swartz points to Leviticus 25 and the celebrations of the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee, which recognized God’s ownership of the land (93).

Swartz (1995) further argues that our ancestors behaved exceptionally with regards to nature. Consider the idea of bal tash-chit; the command not to destroy. Even in a time of warfare the Israelites, it is noted in Deuteronomy 20:19, “do not cut down trees even to prevent ambush or to build siege engines’ do not foul waters or burn crops even to cause an enemy’s submission” (93 – 94). Swartz concludes that if “in extremism” they avoided harm to the environment, it follows that in everyday life they would surely have followed the same creed (93 – 94).

Let us not forget the Redwood Rabbis, who brought members to shareholder meetings to protest logging ancient redwoods. They also “held a plant-in” on the company’s property. The group has also sponsored the National Forest Protection and Restoration Act, aimed at protecting national forests from commercial logging (Motavalli, 2002, no page).
To give an expansive explanation of the Buddhist tradition and its ecological virtues would be a dissertation in itself. I feel that some discussion is in order if only to highlight that even a supposed ecological religion can be party to environmental abuse. Buddhism holds that all sentient beings share certain conditions; birth, death and suffering being the most important. This shared suffering produces in the Buddhist environmentalist compassion and empathy for all sentient beings. In turn, this compassion would have the Buddhist act in a responsible manner towards his/her fellow creatures (Swearer, 1998, no page). So the theory goes.

Also important are the beliefs of *karma* and rebirth. These ideas further bond all sentient beings with a common moral dimension (Swearer, 1998, no page). It should be noted, however, that since people have been “the primary agents in creating the present ecological crisis” that we must “bear the major responsibility in solving it” (Swearer).

Swearer further suggests that rebirth is in some ways similar to the biological sciences, linking humans and non-human beings. As evolution linked species through genetics, so rebirth connects species on a moral basis (no page). This is perhaps similar to the arguments made regarding Paganism. The point must be made that although biology may have shown the links between species, it has done little to prevent people from driving countless species to the brink of extinction. In some cases past the brink.

I am personally of the opinion that Buddhism is more an eco-religion than the Christian tradition. It should also be noted that the current Dalai Lama has long been a proponent of environmental stewardship. He has been vocal on the importance of environmental protection since the 1980s. A number of the Dalai Lama’s statements
have had environmental protection as their message. He participated in the 1992 Earth Summit and the environment is included in his peace plan for Tibet (Gardner, 2003, no page).

Swearer (1998), disagree with the idea that Buddhism as an inherently eco-friendly religion. He concedes that there are some within the faith who are environmentally conscious, but this may not be true of the faith in general. Swearer (1998) acknowledges that the iconic image of the “Buddha under the tree of enlightenment has traditionally been interpreted as a paradigm for ecological thinking”. Contemporary Buddhist environmentalists note that key events in the Buddha’s life took place in nature and that the Buddhists texts attest to the import of nature, especially forests (no page). While these arguments appear as dubious as recent Christian claims that mere references to natural places implies an environmental ethic, a reading of the texts suggests that there is an appreciation of the natural environment and an explicit duty to honor the environment^2.

Swearer (1998) makes the point that that the Buddha’s solace in nature has served as an example for his followers. Buddhists have historically located their centers “in forests and among mountains”. It is in keeping with the Buddha’s example that they seek such places. “Seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I wandered. . . until. . . I saw a delightful stretch of land and a lovely woodland grove, and a clear flowing river with a delightful forest so I sat down thinking, ‘Indeed, this is an appropriate place to strive for the ultimate realization of . . . Nirvana’” (Ariyapariyesana Sutta, Majjhima

^2 See for example the Maharatnakuta Sutra, which calls on the “forests-dwelling monk” to “perform eight deeds to show kindness for all sentient beings” (Swearer, 1998).
This would seem to suggest an appreciation for the inherent value of nature.

Contemporaneously, there are high profile Buddhists who would seem to support the notion of Buddhism as an innately ecological religion. The most prominent is, of course, the Dalai Lama. A, probably, lesser-known Buddhist environmentalist is Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh. He states that “mindful awareness” will be necessary in creating a “peaceful and sustainable world” (Swearer, no page).

As one of the most prevalent traditions, a few words on Islam is important. Motavalli (no page) argues that Islam in fact has “deep ecological teachings”. A sentiment echoed by the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, which states, “Allah entrusted man with the guardianship of the Earth” and that “We have to fulfill that ancient trust now, before it becomes too late” (no page). Furthermore, these teachings are applied to practical, albeit limited, projects. Motavalli cites a partnership between the World Wildlife Fund and the Sultan of Oman, to introduce Oryx back into the wild (no page).

I will now leave this question of religious culpability and consider religion’s role in the environmental movement. Certainly there is much ambiguity on these questions, but Gardner (2003) sums it up well:

Religious cosmologies regarding the natural environment are diverse, and the broad range of teachings might suggest that some religions are naturally ‘greener’ than others. But the reality is more complex. Nearly all religions can be commended and criticized for one aspect or another of their posture towards the environment... scholars see great potential for
developing environmental ethics even within traditions that have not emphasized them (13).

Let us now move onto the question of why it is important to involve the church in the environmental movement.

“The business of character cultivation”:

I have thus far argued that religious institutions have, at best, been silent on the environmental crisis and in some cases complicit. Yet, there is much to suggest that these institutions can play a positive role in the environmental movement. It might be argued that churches must play a role in the environmental movement. Tucker and Williams (1997) argue that those traditional societies that have successfully managed resources in the long term have done so, in part, with religion or ritual (xviii).

In the concluding section, I will contend that there is evidence of an emerging ethic of “creation care” among religious scholars and leaders. In this section, I will discuss why I believe that such an ethic is important. There is, and has been for several decades, a robust environmental movement. Why should the religious community involve itself in environmental protection? That is the question for this section.

The principal arguments for religious stewardship focus on the failure of science and technology to solve the environmental problem. A related school of thought contends that religion is central in character development. It is argued that the environmental crisis is, at its heart, a moral and ethical issue. Hence, religion has a role to play in building environmentally sound character. In a similar vein is the contention that neglect of the environment ultimately is neglect of our fellow man. The issue of
treatment of humankind is certainly central to most religions. Thus, what are the implications for Christians in allowing, for example, environmental racism to exist?

Finally, there are numerous practical reasons for church involvement in the environmental movement. It will be shown that churches provide a number of resources, which prepare people for participation in the policy process.

I will address these arguments in two broad classes: the ideological and the practical. In the former category will be the ethical and moral questions and in the latter group will be those pertaining to the resources available to religious institutions. It is challenging to separate these issues. For example, if the science fails to address ethical or moral issues and the church fills the void, is this an ideological or a practical matter? Thus, some overlap can be expected.

Gardner (2002) makes a similar argument. He suggests that “the effort to build a sustainable world could advance dramatically if the religious people and institutions…and environmentalists” were to partner on these issues (5). On the ideological point, he notes that both groups “look at the world from a moral perspective” and see nature as more than just its economic or utilitarian value. On the practical side, Gardner states that the two groups “have complementary strengths” (5). Environmentalists bring expertise rooted in science, while religious organizations “enjoy moral authority and a broad grassroots presence” (5). Let us take a closer look at what the religious community brings to the environmental movement.
Ideological –

In his essay, White (1967) argued that religious values are “fundamental in the dynamics of cultural and social change” in that they shape the ethics and morals of their followers. Religion is the moral guide for its followers and it must become the voice for environmental protection. This is a sentiment that is widespread among proponents of faith-based stewardship. As Jay McDaniel (1997) puts it, “the classical religions of the world…For good or ill…are in the business of character cultivation. Through their creeds, codes, and cults, they provide images of the good life and offer people ways of finding that life” (106 – 107).

The words of Calvin DeWitt (1997), an evangelical Christian and professor, best describe the ethical reasons for religious involvement. The solution to the environmental problem must be spiritual, because the problem itself is spiritual. As DeWitt notes, “how one relates to Creation reflects how one relates to and honors the Creator” (65). DeWitt continues his argument for religious stewardship. He points to our “unprecedented knowledge”. We have knowledge both of how the world works and how we can protect it. Despite this knowledge environmental degradation continues. His conclusion: “legal and technical solutions…while necessary, have not been sufficient”. What we are missing is the “element of ethics” (100 - 101). He is not alone in these conclusions.

I will cite a number of authors who argue for an ethical or religious approach to environmental problems. The trend among them all, I would argue is the need for a more holistic outlook. Gunn, writing in a book on Environmental Ethics in Buddhism, argues that to achieve a sustainable society “we need specialised skills of many people: environmentalists, scientists, planners, economists and educators” (1998, xiii). These
skills, however, will not be sufficient. What we need, Gunn argues, is a “shared vision….an environmental ethic” (xiii).

The sentiments of Gunn are echoed by many. In his work on Buddhist environmental ethics, da Silva (1998) makes the case that any attempt to address environmental problems must be multifaceted. Any attempts to solve the environmental crisis should be “fed by a number of disciplines cutting across human, social, natural and biological sciences” (1 – 2). This should be so, argues da Silva, because environmental issues are seldom limited to one discipline. Instead, they cross the boundaries of science, law, economics and policy to name a few (2). And echoing the thoughts of various authors, da Silva concludes that science and technology are vital. But he continues, “value questions are equally important” (2).

The idea that environmental problems cross disciplines appears in yet another Buddhist work on ecology in the Harvard series on religion and the environment. Tucker and Williams (1997) acknowledge therein that environmental problems are linked to the most vexing social and economic problems (xvi).

Motavalli (2002), for example argues that the solutions to the environmental crisis must be both technical and spiritual. He cites geology professor George Fisher. Fisher argues that the questions we ask; such as how the west can share resources with the rest of world require scientific knowledge. Science, however, is not adequate because while it can tell us how the world works, it cannot tell us what we should do (Motavalli). How we behave are moral and ethical questions and those are the domain of the world’s religions.
Mahan (2001) makes a similar claim. He posits that the term “Christian environmental stewardship” suggests an “intersection of science and faith” (no page). He speaks as a scientist and a Christian and argues that these are two different ways of knowing, but which “mutually inform one another”. As Motavalli does, Mahan feels that science can tell how the world works but this is inadequate. As stewards of God’s creation we need both scientific understanding and stewardship principles (no page).

Gottlieb (2006) echoes Dewitt’s thoughts. He, Gottlieb, proposes that religions can provide an alternative, rather than a new, moral vision. He argues that we currently have a moral vision that has “accelerated ecological destruction throughout the world” (13). Noting the words of an unnamed third world Christian theologian, he describes the moral vision that drives us. “It has its God: profit and money…it’s high priests: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund-World Bank…it’s doctrines and dogmas: import liberalization, deregulation…it’s temples: the supermegamalls” (13). The task of religious environmentalism, Gottlieb argues, is to point people to a new vision that will promote “values that will ultimately serve people and the earth far better than the ones currently in place” (13).

Numerous authors have similar thoughts. Tucker & Grim (2001) suggest that the solution to the environmental crisis lies in a “more comprehensive worldview and ethics” which will be fostered by religion. Religion shapes attitudes and values, including our attitudes towards nature, they argue. Grim and Tucker envision the religious community acting as facilitator. A community of religious scholars and activists would play a key role in fostering the dialogue of faith-based environmentalism. This is so, suggest the authors because “the attitudes and values that shape people’s concepts of nature come

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primarily from religious worldviews” and furthermore that religion is critical in the mobilization of these sensibilities (Tucker, & Grim, 2001).

What is needed, argues Hill (1998) is a new theology; an environmental theology. This new theology will link Christian traditions to environmental issues (5). This environmental theology should include the following: it should be based on scripture. It should have a Christian approach to the human experience. It should place an emphasis on the transforming role of theology. And it should show the correlation between moral beliefs and ecological concerns (6).

Theology, argues Hill, should be transformative. Theology “can deeply change people’s lives and move them to struggle” (22). He continues that for theology to be effective it must address the “issues of the day” (22). Hill notes people such as Martin Luther King and Thomas Merton, who were moved to action by their Christian beliefs. And he envisions that this new, environmental theology will similarly move Christians, “transforming the conscience of believers and moving them actively to engage in ecological issues”.

The idea that the church has an important role to play is widespread and can be found among scientists themselves. Note the open letter already cited. This letter was written and circulated by prominent scientists who recognized the limitations of science to solve the environmental crisis and the potential. The scientists invited the religious community to join them in facilitating environmental reform (Feldman and Moseley, 2002, 5).

Renowned scientist, Carl Sagan similarly appealed to religious communities to “join scientists in making a commitment to preserve the environment” (Robotham,
1999a, no page). His letter, published in The New York Times, may have caused people to think about religious-environmental alliances. But the environmental movement largely continued with a secular focus (Robotham, 1999a).

Birkeland (1993) concurs that the answer to the environmental crisis cannot be found in technology. Nor for that matter will the solutions be found in current economic, regulations or policies (13). All these mechanisms are, claims Birkeland, inherently biased against environmental preservation and conflict preservation” (13). It must be noted that she does not advocate for a religious intervention, which she feels will be equally ineffective. Our current ways of thinking and acting are experienced through a Power Paradigm” (17), in this case power over nature. Until we address the underlying issues of patriarchy and power, we will not find sufficient solutions to the environmental crisis.

Carroll, Brockelman and Westfall (1997) and Dewitt (1997) add their voice to those who argue that the sciences alone are inadequate to solve the current crisis. The authors concede that the various science and social science disciplines have a role to play, but cannot address the issues without some spiritual, moral and ethical consideration (3-4). They conclude, therefore, that religion has a critical role to play in the solution of the environmental crisis. An article in the Christian Century simply argued that “Science needs religion after all - at least when the goal is to make the masses care about global climate change” (Ecologists of Faith, 2001, no page).

I do not wish to be too critical of science, because certainly there is an important role for science. But as Edward Abbey (1984) put it, “Science with a human face – is
such a thing possible anymore? We live in a time when technology and technologists seem determined to make the earth unfit to live upon” (PAGE?????).

Gardner (2002) suggests that across individuals and communities, “religion is an important source of change” (12). He cites Thomas Berry who lists religion as one of the four major drivers of social change, education, business and government being the other three. And according to psychology, throughout history religion has been one of the major sources of behavior change (12).

These points are demonstrated by the case of the Emmerich’s work with the Tangier watermen (the research which largely inspired my own study). According to Don Baugh of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), Emmerich’s message was essentially the same as the CBF’s. Furthermore, Robotham (1999b, no page) points out that Emmerich was at a distinct disadvantage attempting to encourage environmental ideas to the Tangier community. She was an outsider, had a long history working with the federal government and she was a woman in a decidedly masculine culture (Robotham, 1999b). Yet, she was able to achieve what established groups, such as the CBF could not.

The fact that she was an Evangelical Christian was significant. While her message was much the same as the established environmental groups, she conveyed it on biblical terms (Robotham, 1999b). One of Emmerich's earliest supporters on Tangier concurs. Carlene Shores notes that Emmerich was more easily accepted because she spoke in religious terms.

Echoing the views of Tucker & Grim (2001), Emmerich supports the idea that it is important to acknowledge different worldviews. In her study of the Tangier Island
watermen, Emmerich’s found that “some environmental conflicts are not just centered on the clash over the harvest and management of resources”. There exists a conflict over the differences in worldviews and it is vital that environmental professionals understand these worldviews and incorporate them into the solutions (Emmerich, 2001). Emmerich concluded that “faith…. in faith-based communities can be a facilitator of change that promotes environmental stewardship”.

Emmerich (2001) asserts that the “ways of knowing and learning and ways of communicating” employed by scientists and policymakers are very different from the population in general and religious people in particular. Thus, without the churches to facilitate conversation, the dialogue between religious communities and the environmental movement will break down.

The involvement of the religious community is important because leaders and clergy offer an alternative voice. This is vital given the suspicions that exist between the religious and secular communities. As Scully (2002) notes, the religious community warns against the teachings of theorists such as Peter Singer. Yet, he asks, what teachings do they present as an alternative (15). If secular voices are a deterrent to religious involvement, then religious leaders with an environmental leaning must lend their voices to the movement. Scully argues that if the religious community remains silent on these issues then secular individuals will have to champion the movement (134).

Hargrove argues, mirroring many of the arguments already stated, that both religion and philosophy have an important role to play in the environmental movement. Hargrove sees a role for both, philosophy being better suited to “analyzing ethical
behavior (the intellectual emphasis)” while “religion is much more effective at changing
loyalties, affections, and convictions” (viii).

This may be so, because religious beliefs and affiliations are more strongly held
than other associations. Steensland, et al (2000) note the support for religion both
numerically and ideologically. Religious involvement exceeds all other voluntary
associations, including labor and ethnic groups (292). Furthermore, religious
involvement tends to be “more intense” than with other voluntary affiliations (292).
Considering this devotion and the fact that denominations shape their congregants’
views on political issues, it is important to involve churches in the environmental
movement.

One recent example will demonstrate the impact religious leaders can have on
their followers. Mills (2008) cites a 2005 investigation by the Environmental Investigation
Agency (EIA) and the Wildlife Protection Agency of India. The groups found a huge
market in tiger skins, which were being used for ceremonial rituals in Tibet. The EIA
approached the Dalai Lama who publicly condemned the practice. In a follow up visit to
Tibet two years later, the EIA found no use of tiger skins at the festivals (54).

It is important to address the disconnect between knowing right and doing right.
On its website the EEN makes reference to environmental degradation and its
connection to social justice issues. I would argue that most people would agree that to
allow poor and minority people to suffer environmental racism is wrong. Yet, this has not
stopped the practice from continuing. Ferre (1986) raises this issue, noting that
environmental issues and how we respond are often “deeply affective and motivational”
(2). It is thus important to involve religion, because it is theology that “stands at the volatile surface between piety and philosophy, tradition and reform” (2).

Similarly, Ackerman and Joyner posit that, “[a]s long as the majority…are in some way or other church-related, the church remains an important source for ecological reform….the church is an agent in fostering the mass environmental awareness so desperately needed” (124 - 125).

In a world where it could be argued economic growth is the new religion, the National Council of Churches (NCC) adds an important dimension to the discussion. The NCC concludes that what is needed is “a moral imperative that trumps sheer economic concerns”. It is religion, they argue, that can motivate people into concern for “reverence for the divinely created Earth” (Ecologists of Faith, 2001, no page). Similarly, Leland (1995) argues that our culture has taught that our actions, on a host of issues, should not be directed by our religious convictions (34).

Scully (2003), like many of the writers presented in this section, points to the potential value of the Bible and other sacred texts. Scully notes that while we turn to these texts for moral guidance on many matters, but on the question of animal rights this is seldom true (20). Perhaps it can be argued that until recently we seldom turned to them with regards to the environment. Yet, these writings “carry weight” by “expressing the fundamental principles and aspirations” of society (20).

I noted in my introductory remarks a distinction between eco-theology and environmental ethics. Hargrove (1986) makes the argument that environmental ethics alone, divorced from religion, cannot solve the environmental crisis. The reason he argues is that environmental ethics is essentially a theoretical movement and does not
teach people how to be good stewards. Nor can it compel people to act in an environmentally moral manner. He concludes that in order to motivate people to act as good stewards we need religion (xii).

In a related line of thinking, Gardner (2003) argues that religion has a “particular capacity to generate social capital” (no page). Among its community building skills are generating trust, fostering communication and co-operation and the dissemination of information. Gardner points out that 34% of volunteerism in the United States is performed by religious people and institutions. Much of this volunteer work is not for religious duties, but other societal programs, among them education, youth, political and human services (no page).

This willingness to work for the needs of society, not solely religious interests, “holds potential for the movement to build a sustainable world” (Gardener, 2003, no page). This is particularly encouraging for the environmental movement because the issue might be less contentious than certain other social issues, abortion and gay marriage come to mind. The environment on the other hand is a shared concern. As Gardner notes the environment is “an issue of common concern for the planet and for future generations that transcends religious and national differences” (no page).

Earlier I introduced earlier Matthew Scully’s arguments that some have taken their roles as stewards to mean that they decide which species survive and which do not. He describes this as reverse Genesis and he makes an important point. In this reverse Genesis, it is man who decides who lives and who survives. Man has become the Unmaker and we, the so-called stewards, need to justify nothing. And to what end he asks? Not out of necessity. No, he concludes, the stewards fulfill “irrational desires,
indeed vanities and superstitions” (118). He points to a number of authors who argue that “hunting is not only a noble pursuit but that ‘God intended that we should live in such a way’ (112).

Further, environmentalists were aware that “America’s ‘impulse to redeem and transform itself’ had often arisen from the churches” (Robotham). Citing the oft used examples of anti-slavery and civil rights, Pope recognized that it is through our faith traditions that “we save ourselves” and that the environmental movement has for many years rejected religious institutions (Robotham, 1999a).

It should be noted that the clergy might have an important role to play, because they tend to be respected as moral and spiritual leaders. They are seen to be well educated and engaged in “ideological thinking” which makes them, perhaps, better attuned to moral crises than lay people (Smidt, et al, 2003, 515).

Kimbrell (1995) directs his criticisms at the environmental movement rather than religion. It is his contention that the secular environmental movement has failed because it relies on “obscure scientific debate” and not on “spiritual principles” (17). Principles that should, according to Kimbrell, include “reflection on the sacred and sacramental aspects of nature, and our duty of stewardship” (17).

Emmerich (2001) found this in her study of the Tangier watermen. Her study found that one of the causes of conflict was suspicion of outsiders, particularly scientists, environmentalists and government officials (no page).

Kimbrell (1995) makes a point already touched upon in this discussion; faith in science and technology and reverence for the market system. The environmental movement has failed, he argues, because it has developed “its own trinity” (19). This
trinity holds that; “Science will ultimately allow us to know everything; technology will allow us to do everything and the market will allow us to buy everything” (Kimbrell, 19). This is an ideology; he suggests that is mirrored in society. All of which should not suggest that science has no role to play, nor that religion has been exemplary in its environmental attitudes. It should be noted that opportunities exist and that the religious community potentially has an important role to play. Carl Pope of the Sierra Club feels that environmentalists missed an opportunity to involve the religious community in the movement.

Religion is not without blame. Gardner (2003) notes that religion does act as a conservative force, enforcing existing social norms (no page). In this capacity religion is in fact an obstacle to the environmental movement, given that sustainability will not occur without changes in current economies (Gardner). While Pope suggests that the environmentalists of his generation knew that the challenge was a moral one; “that the sin which tempts our leaders to despoil nature is pride, or hubris, and that the god whose worship seduces us to follow our leaders down that path is greed, or Mammon.” (Robotham, 1999a). Gardner (2003) notes that as long as religions support the status quo with regards to immoral social and environmental practices, the environmental community will continue to be suspicious of religion (no page).

At this point, I tender a few words in defense of science and clarify the relationship of science with eco-theology. What is needed is a partnership of faith and science. The opposite, as Phillips (2006) points out will have equally catastrophic results for the environment. Several authors have been presented who argue that science alone cannot solve the environmental crisis. What I propose and what several
others have argued is that the religious community must join in common cause with the secular environmental community.

At this juncture it should be noted that what I, and these authors, propose is not the substitution of religion for science and technology. Rather that there must be a reconciliation of science and technology with faith. This issue is particularly important when one considers the disregard for science by certain elements of the religious right.

Phillips (2006) notes that as fundamentalist Christians gained a greater presence in government we witnessed national policy disregard for science. This was particularly true with regard to climate change, biotechnology and petroleum geology. These policies were, Phillips maintains, motivated by theology (174). While I advocate for religious involvement in the environmental movement, theocracy is not the aim. Under such conditions, environmental policy and regulations, among others, would be supplanted by questions life, sex and family (Phillips, 209).

The result of disregard for science has brought about, in Phillips words, “an American Disenlightenment” (217). This “substitution of faith for reason” is, according to some, the greatest threat to science since Galileo’s imprisonment by the Catholic Church (217). This disregard for science in favor of religion is not unprecedented. According to Phillips, both the Roman Empire and Hapsburg Spain elevated faith over logic and stifled scientific inquiry (226); it proved to the detriment of both. Roman Catholicism created a barrier between science and faith, unique to Christianity (Freeman, cited in Phillips, 228).

Phillips argues that contemporaneously we have already seen a number of policy outcomes of this theocracy. Religious fervor has resulted in “interference in science to
biblically inhibited climatology” (Phillips, 232). There have also been calls to abolish both the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency (233). As theocracy developed in the United States, “theological correctness” took over government relations with science (246). From climate to geology to entomology, the policy was shaped more by Genesis than science. The consequences were dire for environmental policy. To give just one example: among this constituency is the belief that God, not carbon dioxide cause climate change.

Scully writes neither as a theologian, nor an academic, nor, by his own admission, an especially pious person, but he offers some poignant insights. In his work on animal rights, Scully (2003) argues that concern for animals is a battle, not of reason, but of myths. Given a choice of myths he opts for “man as the Creature of Compassion”, offering that it is “better to be sentimental about life” (26).

Scully also questions humankind’s dogmatic literal interpretation of the dominion arguments, when so many stories of the Bible are understood and accepted as metaphorical. When it comes to questions of dominion, we read as strict literalists and as skeptics when it concerns peace-bringing (28). Such reinterpretations, I argue, must come from the religious leaders.

Practical –

There are a number of practical reasons to advocate religious participation in the environmental movement. First, there are issues of distrust and skepticism between secular and religious parties. I have already touched on this, but will elaborate. The second issues are concerned with the vast resources that churches potentially offer.
This includes both the scope of their reach, their standing in the community and the financial assets that the religious community can bring to bear.

I will make the point in the following section, but it bears repeating: what I am proposing with this project is done in the spirit of separation of church and state. While there will certainly be instances where religious groups engage their elected officials and indeed act to alter certain policies, this should not be confused with propounding any political position. Certainly, this is a fine line to tread. But I believe that the cases I will present will demonstrate that it can be achieved.

Religious organizations potentially bring a number of assets to the environmental movement; Gardener (2003) lists five. They can shape worldviews or cosmologies, churches have moral authority, religions have large constituencies, religious institutions typically have substantial material resources and the churches have community-building capability (1). Similarly, Taylor and Chatters (1988) note that the churches can mobilize four types of resources; material, spiritual, emotional and informational (193).

Religious institutions can use this power because they “stand at the intersection of public and private life” (Greenberg, 380). As such, they are a liaison between the state and the individual. In this, they can either support the status quo or generate opposition and criticism thereof (Greenberg, 380). Such was the case during the civil rights movement. It was claimed then that the church was the “most important force at work” (Findlay, 1990, 66). Findlay points to several ways in which the church involved itself in the movement. This activity ranged from sit-ins by the clergy (68) to conducting “Civil Rights Workshops” across the Midwest (75).
Similarly, religions often partner with social agencies or support other agencies in their efforts. Polson (2008) contends that rather than creating their own programs, congregations might support causes by offering resources, such as space or volunteers (46). Polson notes that 65% of congregations have at least one affiliation with a service organization. On average, U.S. congregations support five organizations, with resources (46). Polson concludes that it is through these partnerships and not direct involvement that the churches contribute to social services (46).

In her research, Polson identified four types of pairings. Of particular interest to this study was partnerships. His study was concerned with the provision of services, but I think the lessons apply here. He found that “services provided through partnerships benefit both the service agencies and the congregations” (54). Secular agencies may have technical skills and professional staff, but congregations provide “volunteer labor, physical facilities, and social networks” (54).

Certainly, the environmental movement could utilize these resources. And as I will discuss in the closing sections of the literature review, there is a growing network of partnerships between the environmental and secular movements. Polson points to a second type of relationship, adoptive relationships. These tend to be less formal and are always initiated by the congregations (55). Adoptive relationships evolve when a congregation “proactively seek ways to contribute” to the work of the organization (55). This proactive approach would seem to suggest that the congregation sees the work of the organization as important and is invested in it. In my own survey I will briefly touch on this issue, but it is, I think, an interesting question for future research.
Clerical leaders argue that the Christian mission requires caring for the less fortunate and fuelling communal involvement or active participation in social welfare ministries. This community outreach is an important component of clerical communication, and in some churches, particularly the black churches, is inseparable from political action. These activities frequently have a political component, even if the activities are seemingly apolitical in nature (Greenberg, 382).

The *Christian Century* points to questions of poverty and religious organizations. The poorest nations are among those who will be most affected by climate change. Yet, in these countries there is often little capacity for research and policy development (Religion and Ecology, no page). Under these conditions, what is needed is “a moral imperative” (Religion and Ecology, no page). Through their commitment to the poor and respect for “the divinely created Earth”, religions can play an important role in filling the void created by this lack of political infrastructure (Religion and Ecology).

Bob Edgar, general secretary of NCC, argues that helping the poor and caring for the earth are the “only two subjects” that “Christians can talk about without killing each other”. It is true that there is growing concern for faith based environmentalism, but I am not sure that it is yet pervasive in the religious community. But there is widespread concern for the poor. And perhaps this care for the poor can serve as a bridge between the faith communities and the environmental community (Religion and Ecology, no page).

Greenberg (2000) notes that “political communication and recruitment” are widespread throughout religious institutions (382). What form this communication takes can vary. It appears that the evangelical clergy, both white and African American, are
more willing to engage in explicitly political activities. This most often takes the form of providing information, discussing issues and encouraging civic participation (Greenberg, 383). And while some oppose supporting a political party or candidate, this is not always true.

The question of church involvement takes on greater importance when one considers the African American community. Several authors note that often churches are the only nongovernmental entity in the black community (Billingsley, 1999 & Gronjberg, 1990, cited in Brown, & Brown, 2003, 617). One might also expect that this condition is also true of other low-income and minority communities. These are often the very people who are more likely to be exposed to environmental hazards, the most commonly noted is the siting of hazardous waste facilities (for example, Arp & Boeckelman, 1994 and Bullard, 1990 cited in Arp & Boeckelman, 1997).

Arp & Boeckelman (1997), noting more direct, salient threats to minority communities, found churches more active in African American communities than in white (261). They concluded that religion was “a factor in explaining Black environmentalism” (263). They further noted that there need not be overt activism by the churches, that attendance was sufficient to promote environmentalism (261).

Continuing this theme, Steensland, et al (2000) argue that churches remain a central institution in the lives of African Americans. While many white Protestants have separated the religious elements from the political and economic, this is not so for the African American community. Thus we find, still, an intersection of the “worldly and the sacred” and a greater mutual influence of the religious and the social (294).
The significance of religion in the black communities is noted by Taylor and Chatters (1988), who suggest that both historically and contemporaneously black churches “have played a crucial role in the lives of black Americans” (193). This is, at least in part, due to the fact that blacks have been denied access to various social institutions (194). The authors further note that the church is second to only the family in black communities. Church involvement comes from both formal channels in the church organization and informally between church members (194). While the church plays a prominent role in the lives of African Americans, its influence is certainly not limited to that community.

Churches have been recognized for their effectiveness in mobilizing the community and are “significant...with respect to issues involving morality” (Pelissero, 2003, 79). And despite the alleged separation of church and state (more on that later) “denominations continue to be very politically active” (Van Geest, 2008, 338). Given this connection between religion and its ability to influence their followers who, in turn, can influence policy, it is important to understand to what extent religious institutions are promoting an environmental ethic among their followers.

This active political involvement and the church’s ability to influence followers is echoed by Smidt, et al (2003). The authors note that “the clergy are well positioned socially to influence others politically” (515) and further that many clergy do in fact engage in political activities (516). This is of political important because of the millions of people who attend church weekly, many “listen carefully to messages from the pulpit about what they should, and should not, do” (516).
This is particularly significant when one considers the overwhelming amount of people who associate with some religion. By some estimates as many as 80% of the world’s population belong to one of the some 10,000 world religions. Of these about 150 have over one million followers. The three largest religions (Hinduism, Islam and Christianity) account for approximately two thirds of the global population (Gardner, 2003, no page).

Thus, religions “have the ear of multitudes of adherents” (Gardner, 2002, 5) a majority of the world’s population. While there is not yet a commitment to sustainability among these followers, there is, according to Gardner a growing receptivity to the idea. For example, “in a survey of Americans by the Biodiversity Project in Wisconsin…56 percent of respondents said that environmental protection is important because the Earth is ‘God’s creation’” (18). It is true that some disagreements, even within denominations, prevail on how to proceed with these beliefs. Gardner (2003) contends that the “raw numbers are so impressive” that if just a small fraction can be marshaled to building an environmentally healthy society it “could advance the sustainability agenda dramatically” (no page).

In addition to the sheer numbers of religious followers, religious institutions often possess “strong financial and institutional assets” (Gardner, 2002, 5). While little reported, religious institutions have for several years been using their wealth to shape corporate operating policies. Gardner states that religious organizations might use these resources to drive sustainability (5). Gardner (2002) claims that in the last 3 years half of all socially oriented shareholder resolutions have been filed or co-filed by religious groups. Nor is he the only one paying attention to faith-based shareholder initiatives.
Before initiating a campaign, the secular group Shareholder Action Network (which advocates ethical investing and shareholder action) consults with the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR).

For more than a decade, the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility has been using its shareholder power to shape corporate operating procedures (Gardner, 2002, 19). The ICCR is group of 275 Catholic, Jewish and Protestant investors. The group, which has an estimated worth of $110 billion, every year sponsors shareholder resolutions on social and environmental issues (Scheer, 2004, no page). The group is working to encourage its portfolio companies to “behave proactively by reducing CO² emissions to sustainable levels” (no page).

Among the ICCR’s other projects are shareholder advocacy to reduce the use of genetically modified (GM) foods. Leslie Lowe, ICCR’s environment program director, credits the group with aiding in Monsanto’s decision to move away from GM foods (Scheer, no page).

With their large numbers and wealth, religious institutions can also affect consumer behavior and the market place. Hoffman (2000) points to the Episcopal Diocese of California. The Diocese adopted a resolution instructing all 87 churches in the state to buy “clean, renewable energy” (122).

Greenberg’s (2000) observations that political recruitment in churches is widespread, has already been discussed. And while political communication most often takes the form of disseminating information, it is also true that churches advocate political messages, parties and politicians (Greenberg, 383). In this light and considering Phillips (2006) arguments that a number of policies on the environment have been
shaped by the “biblical worldview” (64) of fundamentalist office holders, it becomes particularly important for diverse Christian denominations to become involved, in a positive manner, in the environmental movement.

Phillips (2006) points to a number of fundamentalist politicians, most notable are Tom DeLay, James Inhofe and George W. Bush, whose worldviews have proven detrimental to environmental concerns. Phillips considers this a characteristic of the evangelical movement, but this work will demonstrate this is not entirely accurate. Nonetheless, this fundamentalist movement continues to gain prominence (64). The Interfaith Council of Environmental Stewardship\(^3\) has called for a “sound theology” to guide environmental policy. Given pronouncements of the group it can be deduced that these policies will not be overly concerned with environmental regulation and protection (66).

My research is not concerned with the radicalization of American religion that some (Phillips being one example) allege. But it is important to recognize that this “fringe” movement exists and largely it is no friend to the environmental movement. Thus, it becomes imperative that the moderate voices of the religious community add their voice to the environmental movement. It is also vital to note that this radical element has no qualms about ignoring the separation of church and state. This is an important issue and one that I will address at length in the following section.

It is also important to consider the suspicions and the mistrust in the religious community of the secular movement. Emmerich (2001) found this in her work with the

\(^3\) Formed by a group of religious conservatives. Other tenets of the group favor property rights and economic development (Phillips, 2006, 66).
Tangier Island watermen. Emmerich notes that the rural, conservative and faith-based community was often “unable or, in some cases, unwilling” to utilize the environmental ethics of outsiders. She further notes that many of these populations are in dire need of sustainability plans, but their fear and mistrust prevent them from reaching out to environmentalists (Emmerich).

It would appear that in such communities local churches could play an important role, either facilitating the meeting of the two groups. Or if this proves too large a barrier to overcome, churches can spread the environmental message or can serve as models for sustainable practices. Emmerich came to this same conclusion, noting, “faith, in rural, faith-based communities can be a facilitator of change that promotes environmental stewardship (Emmerich, 2001, no page).

Suspicions, it must be noted, exist on both sides. Gardner (2003) argues that while religion has the power to make people rethink their worldviews and change their habits and attitudes, it has not always used this power. It is of course possible that religion can be the instrument that teaches people to rethink these paradigms. Some would question its ability or willingness to do so. Rohr, notes that “church people by and large mirror the larger population” and furthermore “on the whole…tend to be just as protective of power, prestige, and possessions as everyone else” (Gardner, 2003, no page). Given that “a sustainable world won't be built without major changes to the world’s economies”, it might be fair to view religion as a conservative force, which would be a hindrance to the environmental movement (no page).

Furthermore, if religion abandons its “prophetic potential” and fails to call attention to “immoral social and environmental realities” distrust among
environmentalists is likely to remain (Gardner, 2003, no page). So, while churches can bring an environmental message to their followers they can also facilitate a relationship between religious people and the secular environmental community. As religious leaders and institutions show concern for the environmental and their commitment to its protection, they can help to blunt some of the animosity between the two groups.

Before moving onto an examination of historical examples of religious involvement in social movements, I offer the words of Scully, an author quoted extensively throughout this work.

We can blame technology, or economics, or global demand among the many available excuses. Whatever the cause, we, humanity, have not kept up our end of the bargain. Now we think only of ourselves, our need to cut costs, our ambitions for higher profits, our taste for leanness, our desire for consistency…The material incentive for care is simply gone (271).

Assuming it is true that we have lost the incentive to care, whether religiously fostered or not, religion remains an ideal institution to help us get it back. As Hoffman (2000) argues, “religious institutions help shape values and norms at both the individual and societal levels” and it, religion, “can alter people’s behavior by directly affecting their values and beliefs” (119 – 120).

*The Church as Agent of Social Change:*

My research is concerned with the role that Christian churches are playing in affecting social change with regard to environmental problems. Specifically, I am
exploring whether the churches of the Eastern Shore and Northern Neck of Virginia are engaged in and encouraging environmental stewardship among their congregations. I introduce this section to address how the church can become involved in the public policy process in a society that espouses the ethic of separation of church and state.

My supposition throughout this work that religion has an important role to play in the environmental movement. In the following section, I present the notion of Religion as an Agent of Social Change. The examples I present are not related to environmental issues. While the idea of religion and stewardship may be in its childhood, religious activism is not. I offer a number of examples to illustrate the great influence that religion can have in shaping personal attitudes and thereby affecting social change.

The Separation of Church and State -

Despite constitutional mandates to separate church and state it is widely accepted that religion is closely tied to public life and specifically politics (see for example, Van Geest, 2008, Smidt, et al, 2003 and Loveland, et al, 2005). Add to those commentators, Kraus (2007) who notes that “religion remains one of the most important factors influencing political attitudes and behavior” (67). This includes a variety of activities such as attending political rallies to helping a particular party or contributing funds (67). I should note at the outset that what I envision is not a political movement.

Daniel (2006) who posits that the place of religion in America’s public life remains ambivalent. Yet, religion has been central in “many of the most significant events that have shaped this country’s heritage” (748). And while collusion between church and state must be avoided (749), it would be equally futile to attempt to “push religious
groups to the margins of public life” (750). Daniel suggests that the Christian right has attempted to force religious doctrines into the political arena. This should not be the aim of religious involvement in public life. Instead, religious voices should be given a “respected place in this public forum" as indeed should the voices of various groups (150). The words of James Dunn are instructive here: “separation is not neat. It is messy, difficult, inconsistent" (cited in McDaniel, 2008, 418). And it is in that spirit that I offer these thoughts on the role of the church in the public sphere.

As Greenberg (2000) notes it is perhaps inevitable that the church become an agent for political action. She argues that even apparently non-political messages from the pulpit can take on political significance. The clergy often introduces social issues, which “often require interaction with agencies of the state” (382). The congregation’s participation in these social activities exposes them to the political process. According to Greenberg, the church “increases political engagement and imbues congregants with a sense of having a stake in the policy-making process” (Greenberg, 382). That being true, it is important to examine how social change occurs without breaching the concept of separation of church and state.

Some, for example Smith (1995), feel that involving churches in the environmental movement is a breach of the treasured notion of separation between state and church. As he argues, “America cherishes the concept of separation of church and state” and he argues that “we ought to separate church and state in the ecology area as well as elsewhere” (27). Greenberg (2000) has found similar sentiments among the religious community, particularly in the mainline Protestant denominations, where there was a feeling that the church should have no role in political life (385 – 386).
Danforth (2006) offers the opposite view. He feels that religious involvement in politics need not be a breach of church and state. The Constitutional separation of church and state was designed to prevent religious tests for holding public office. It further means the government could not establish religion and would not obstruct people from practicing their faiths. It did not, and does not, prevent people of faith from participating in political matters, Danforth argues (4).

Furthermore, Danforth argues that many in the religious community feel “politics is a religious as well as a civic duty” (11). He points to the various social causes which people of faith have championed, from the civil rights movement, to opposition to the death penalty, to assistance to the poor (11). People of faith, he argues, engage in the political process in order to meet the demands of their faith.

Robotham (1999a) voices a similar sentiment in his discussion of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. This coalition of church groups has a 10-year plan to encourage environmental protection by religious groups and has committed $16 million to that goal. The group, however, points out that this is not a movement “rooted in Washington.” Instead, it is a faith-based movement of people from across the country, who are “taking their faith seriously” (Robotham, no page).

It has been noted that religions and religious people have been guilty of maintaining the status quo. This is particularly true with regards to the pursuit of material wealth. Solle (1994) points to the “double function” of religion. While it can support the status quo, religion can serve as a “means of protest, change, and liberation” (cited in Billings and Scott, 173). Greenberg (2000) states that the focus on issues such as
abortion and school curriculum reform by the conservative religious communities has revived the question of the political role of religion in America (379).

Billings and Scott also note that this dual function of religion has caused activism to evolve as a “central concern” (174). How has this activism manifested itself? Let me now offer some past examples of church involvement in social issues and in public and political life.

**Religion in Public Life -**

The arguments for religious involvement in the political process are numerous. Tucker & Grim (2001) note that religions have long been the impetus for social change. There is the oft-cited examples of civil and women’s rights, which were both supported by religious people and institutions. Citing another example of religious involvement in policy and social issues O’ Loughlin (1993) points to the boycott of table grapes in the 1960s and 1970s. “Help came from other unions, religious and civic organizations and individuals” (157 – 158).

The Civil Rights movement is often used to demonstrate the church’s active participation in political life. It has been argued that Martin Luther King was determined to use the church, specifically the National Baptist Council, as the “institutional basis for the Civil Rights Movement (Best, 2006, 195). And King’s nemesis J.H. Jackson, although described as “ tepid” (205) in his civil rights convictions moved the church into a more activist role in the movement (196). Jackson was in fact an open supporter of President Kennedy and consulted for the president on matters relating to the black community (197).
It is not just in the United States that the church can be found in social justice movements. In numerous social movements throughout the globe, the voice of the church can be heard. Gottlieb (2006) cites several, “we can find religious voices in the fall of apartheid and the collapse of tyrannical communism, in the brave spirit of democracy in Burma and reconciliation in Cambodia, in the movement to end the Vietnam War, and even surprisingly, in the movement for women’s equality” (16).

More recently, a coalition of religious and human rights groups have partnered to stop the genocide in Darfur. Among the group's religious members are the Alliance of Baptists, Christian Solidarity International and Lutheran World Relief. The coalition has strong support from numerous non-Christian groups. Among them; the American Jewish Committee, American Islamic Congress, the Armenian Church of America and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. This is just a small sample; the group includes as many as 180 different organizations.

According to Billings and Scott (1994), it was during the 1960s and 1970s, that the church became politicized and active. This marked a turning point in the role of the church. The authors suggest that prior to joining campaigns supporting civil, women’s and gay rights, among others, the church was viewed as an indirect actor, generally supporting the status quo. That changed and the church assumed a more direct and combative stance (175). These direct action groups have become prominent in politics. The church is no longer content to influence individuals through conscience, religious groups are now mobilizing their followers to act, so argue Billings and Scott (176). This mirrors Findlay’s (1990) description of the National Council of Churches (NCC) during the Civil Rights era. Findlay describes the NCC’s sympathy for the Civil
Rights movement as early as the 1950s. In these early years that support was largely in the form of proclamations of support. It was not until the 1960s that this support morphed into action (67 – 68).

In a more general and less combative manner, churches continue to play a political role. Greenberg (2000) notes that “political communication and recruitment” in churches are a widespread phenomenon. This from an institution widely held to be nonpolitical. People are more likely to hear political messages in their place of worship than on the job or in other nonpolitical settings (Verba, Lehman Schlozman & Brady, cited in Greenberg, 382).

What this communication might be varies. It appears that evangelical clergy, both white and African American, are more willing to engage in explicitly political activities. This most often takes the form of providing information, discussing issues and encouraging performing civic duties (Greenberg, 383). And while some are opposed to supporting a political party or candidate this is not always true.

The example of the church and the civil rights movement is oft repeated. Sager (2007) argues that the church “has been the cornerstone of the black community” (473). As the centre of the civil rights movement, it remains true that most political leaders emerge from their churches. And the churches continue to be the central political force, working for social change, within the black community (473).

The clergy continues to be vocal on political issues. Djupe and Gilbert (2002), in their study of Lutheran and Episcopalian clergy, found that “54.6% of clergy prayed publicly on a political or social issue” and a majority have taken a stand on a political issue (598). Further, approximately 50% have taken a stand on a social issue while
preaching. Interestingly, Djupe and Gilbert report that less than one fifth prayed for candidates and just over 10% endorsed a candidate (598). They conclude that clergy are more comfortable addressing issues than supporting parties or politicians.

Thus, I would offer that the eco-theology movement need not breach the doctrine of church and state. Those who support this argument note that there are certain issues that are moral and are therefore the domain of the church. Speaking of civil rights, Leland (1995) argues that it was not a question of right and left, but of right and wrong (34). And according to Greenberg, (2000) religion has played an important political role throughout American history. She notes the role of the Quakers in abolition, the support for temperance by the evangelical churches and the resources provided to the Civil Rights movement from the black churches (379). More recently, a number of religious groups played a pivotal role in the formation of Jubilee 2000, a movement campaigning for debt reduction for poor nations (Tucker & Grim, 2001, PAGE).

I would argue that the environmental crisis is certainly a moral question. In the following section, I will discuss the various programs that churches have introduced. One of the issues that is raised repeatedly is that of social justice, which I would suggest is clearly a matter for religious people to address. Hill (1998) in his criticism of the Catholic Church did recognize that the work that is being done grew out of concerns for peace and justice. Environmental issues are often closely connected to social, economic and gender issues (Hill, 3).

In contrast to the argument that religion is a private matter, Greenberg (2000) contends that churches are in fact political institutions, which exist at the crossroads of public and private life (380). As such, she argues the church can, and should, provide
political information, opportunities and resources for people to engage in the political process (378). Greenberg envisions churches as “agents of political mobilization” and furthermore acting as “intermediaries between the individual and the state” (378).

Another issue is relevant to the question of environmental protection and that is the question of “safe or ‘free space’”. In this space, people have the opportunity to deliberate and to plan on their course of collective action (Greenberg, 20002, 380). I think that this is important, because the church has not yet figured out its role in the environmental movement.

This concept was evident during the abolition movement. The Grimke sisters gave anti-slavery “parlor talks”. These talks were often held in churches (Collins, 2003, 167). There are other instances of abolitionists using the church podium to preach their message. One Ellen Smith spoke at a church in Maine where opponents howled, stamped and kicked and boys threw hymnbooks at her (165). There is nothing to suggest that these churches were active in the movement. What these examples illustrate is this idea of churches offering free space. These examples also demonstrate how churches can lend support to a movement, through education and lectures.

Incidentally, Angelina Grimke was the author of a pamphlet entitled *Appeal to the Christian Women of the Southern States*. She argued that slavery was a “crime against God and man” (Collins, 167). Arguments similar to those are now being made about environmental abuse.

interest in the collective good, which has positive consequences such as improving the performance of “representative government” (cited in Greenberg, 2000, 308).

It is also worthwhile to note that the skills necessary for political action, whether environmental or otherwise, are often developed in nonpolitical settings, such as in one’s church (Brown & Brown, 621). Church attendance increases the likelihood that an individual will develop civic skills, such as communication, letter writing and organizational ability (Brown & Brown, 620). Social networking is also possible in congregations.

People make their decisions and are influenced by social networks and in this context; the church is a “proximate influence” (Greenberg, 380). Through sermons and social contact congregations are instilled with the ideals of living a good Christian life. The link to policy is made when church leaders provide political information or provide opportunities for preparation for participation in the political process (379 – 381).

While I have been championing the church as an agent for social change, specifically environmental change, certain caveats must be acknowledged. While trying to understand what actions clergy take and why, one must consider “members’ voices”. And it should be remembered that the clergy’s attempts reflect “member’s orientation toward participation in politics” (Greenberg, 384). Consider for example Greenberg’s (2000) findings.

Greenberg’s study showed a diversity not among church leaders’ attitudes, but in the attitudes of members. Generally, the respondents felt the church had some role to play in the political process. On what that involvement should be there was a range of opinions. One participant felt that letter writing and signing petitions was appropriate
Others felt the church’s role was to act an example, performing civic duties that others might follow its lead (385). Although the respondents from the mainline churches embraced civic responsibility, their responses were generally negative with regards to political participation. Greenberg contends that despite the fact that their actions are political, these respondents held that the church had no role to play in the political process (385 – 386).

Greenberg found that while white evangelical churches are more politically active than their mainline counterparts their participation tends to be in more narrowly defined areas. The white evangelical church focuses on a “particular political agenda” (Greenberg, 389) and whether this agenda includes the environment is not clear.

There also appears to be a political disconnect between the ideals of the clergy and the congregation, particularly in the mainline Protestant denominations. As one pastor replied: “I have a feeling that over the years, I’ve kind of watched, and I think there are probably some of the clergy who may be a little more liberal, more aware of some of the social issues than some of the parishioners are” (Greenberg 384).

Greenberg attributes this to a clergy who “tend to be more ideologically committed than their members”. The result, she argues is that mainline white Protestant churches have “trouble grappling with political issues in church” (384). She demonstrates this by citing members of a liberal church who complained that their pastor devoted time during services to issues such as AIDS.

I have offered this section to suggest that religions have long been involved in social movements. Often this involves involvement in the political process. Thus, I feel it was necessary to address how an eco-theology might evolve with regards to the
separation of church and state. While it was demonstrated that certain elements would ignore the idea, this need not be the case. I conclude by offering that religion has long been central in shaping political views. There is no indication that this will change in the near future.

Guth, Green, et al (1995) note that political scientists have long realized the role religion plays in affecting political views (264). The authors conclude that it has recently been found that this influence is even greater than formerly recognized (264). Others claim that until recently religion in America was considered a private affair and hence not studied as extensively as factors such as race or income (Phillips, 2006, 122). While Phillips argues that for some time academics have overlooked the impact of religion on political life it is now widely accepted.

So, we can conclude that assertions of separation of church and state notwithstanding, religion will continue to shape attitudes on a range of issues. I suggest one of these issues should be the environment. The religious community brings many assets to the environmental movement. And as I will now discuss is bringing those resources to environmental causes.

A shift in thinking:

Contrary to the notion that Lynn White was anti-Christian, at best a “heretic” and possibly the “Antichrist” (Nash 95), he in fact believed that there was a “biblical basis” for environmentalism (Nash, 89). White’s position was that for some 2000 years, the Bible had been interpreted as giving absolute power to the human species, but he also argued that a reinterpretation was both possible and necessary. It was White’s
contention that there was a need for a new understanding of the scriptures and of
Christian traditions. I would argue that we are beginning to see a re-evaluation and re-
interpretation.

It has been stated that religions arrived late on the environmental scene, but they
have nonetheless arrived. And they are “beginning to respond in remarkably creative
ways” (Tucker & Williams, 1997, xvii). These practices include revisiting their theologies,
improving or implementing sustainable practices and making long-term environmental
commitments (xvii). I will discuss these in the following sections.

Despite this growing movement, the attitudes towards environmentalism and
religion are varied. Reporting on a Duke University study, Basgall (2002) notes that
attitudes within the religious community range from “great concern to complete
indifference” (no page). I will begin then with those who do not subscribe to a
philosophy of faith-based environmentalism. The Duke researchers labeled them the
“Indifferent Worldview”. I will call them Religious Dissenters.

**Religious Dissenters –**

The views of John Passmore have already been discussed. Passmore concluded
that religion, either western or non-western, would be ineffective in solving the
environmental crisis. In the case of Christianity, he contended, so many opposing
claims had been made that a Biblical basis could be found to support any argument.
Thus, the “ability to justify anything ultimately amounts to the ability to justify nothing”
(Passmore, 1974, cited in Hargrove, xv).
Birkeland (1993) questions whether any mainstream movements, religion among them, can be effective because they “fail to satisfy the apparent need for a holistic, integrated approach” (31). Writing from an eco-feminist perspective, she is concerned that these so-called *Mainstream* approaches do not examine the underlying androcentric assumptions of Western culture. This gender blindness is pervasive through most environmental movements and makes fundamental change impossible (30 – 31).

Birkeland (1993) highlights a number of reasons for the insufficiency of religion to solve the environmental crisis. She makes, I think, a number of points relevant to this study. Her arguments are very thorough and incorporate the arguments made, either implicitly or explicitly, by a number of other writers. I will therefore address her arguments in some detail. While Birkeland acknowledges, “personal transformation may be necessary” she concludes that “it is an insufficient condition for social change” (47 – 49). Among her arguments against a faith-based environmental solution are the following:

The first criticism Birkeland (1993) offers is the evolution of religions into institutionalized organizations and hence part of the “officially sanctioned power structure” (47). As Jensen (2006) puts it, change cannot be achieved using the “master’s tools” of which religion is one (85). Other authors have weighed in on this matter. Not all agree with the conclusions of Birkeland.

Although he never mentions White’s article, Jensen’s proposition is strongly reminiscent of White’s. He differs with White on the solution however. Like Birkeland, Jensen (2006) feels that religion is too tightly intertwined with the dominant culture. Without going too far into his premise, it is his conclusions that we have a civilization
based on violence and exploitation. The result is a “vale of tears” mentality (70) and a sense of rage at the natural world. Religion is of no help because it too is traumatized by the violence and along with politics, education, industry and others has participated in the exploitation of the natural world (188).

Not all commentators are of this mindset. For example, Solle (1994) notes that while the church may act to maintain the status quo it can also serve as a “means of protest, change, and liberation” (Solle, cited in Billings and Scott, 173). This is demonstrated by the fact that movements such as civil and women’s rights were supported by religious groups (Billings and Scott, 1994).

On a similar note, Gardner (2003) acknowledges that religions become an obstacle when they “neglect their prophetic potential and their calling to be critics of immoral social and environmental realities” (no page). But he concludes that this need not be the case, that religion can be a voice for the environment. Citing a Franciscan author Gardner offers that religion has a long history of reform that allow it to get back to its roots of liberation from undue attachment to the material world (no page).

Related to this are the constraints imposed on individuals by institutions. Birkeland (1993) argues that our individual actions are “constrained by power relationships and institutional corruption” (47) and that the profitability of environmental overuse and abuse make individual action futile. Thus, any attempt to overcome the current social and environmental crisis would be overwhelmed by the “pressures of our militarist economy” (47). While I will acknowledge that there are some who will benefit from, and hence support, the status quo, there are many who realize that our current
course of action is unsustainable and immoral. I would further argue that the numbers of the latter group are on the rise.

The next point is perhaps the most pertinent to this study. Birkeland argues, “spirituality, belief systems, or world views do not necessarily improve individual behavior” (47). On this point, she is obviously correct. Note, for example, environmental degradation among Buddhists, a faith largely accepted to be more eco-conscious than the Judeo-Christian traditions. Or consider the fact that Christians allow environmental racism to continue. This treatment of their fellow humans is most assuredly an affront to their religious teachings. I have proposed that while some might interpret religious texts as giving humans a mandate to abuse nature, it can also be argued that the opposite interpretation is possible. This has not necessarily inspired people to act in environmentally sound ways.

While I personally agree with Birkeland’s arguments and her call to challenge the current androcentric worldview, I do not think that we should rule out the role that religion could play. Furthermore, I am not convinced that her solutions would find much support in the mainstream environmental movement, not to mention the population in general.

I argued that is no consensus on what religion’s role has been in creating the environmental crisis. There is also still debate on what its role should be in mitigating said crisis. Hoffman (2000) points to “dissenters” in the religious community who argue that there is no “theological imperative….to support the notion that environmental protection is a religious issue” (121 – 122). Hoffman further notes those who are concerned with the implications of faith-based stewardship. Noting one Reverend
Robert P. Dugan Junior, who worries about the “pantheistic element” of “preaching the environmental message” (121 – 122). This concern with nature worship is a common to those religious leaders who have not joined the environmental movement.

This fear for of pantheism is repeated often. Gottlieb (2006) notes an unnamed minister who admits that pollution and environmental degradation are wrong. This minister goes on to argue, however, "the folly and evil of worshipping Mother Earth and treating each species as sacred and having the rights as humans is even more wrong" (7 – 8). And Motavalli (2002, no page) cites Catholic Priest and co-founder of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, who is critical of the “the New-Ageist neopaganism in which people ascribe divine status to animals and plants”. Even conceding that much of this activism comes from mainline Christian denominations.

Motavalli (2002) speculates that at least some of this resistance to faith-based environmentalism stems from the movements effectiveness. The growth of environmental and religious partnerships has led to a concurrent growth in opposition groups. Motavalli points to the aforementioned Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the, now defunct, Interfaith Council for Environmental Stewardship, which position themselves as the conservative alternative to the National Council of Churches.

Peter Bakken, co-ordinator of outreach for the Au Sable Institute, concedes that it can be challenging to bring evangelicals to the environmental movement. He points to a “strand of conspiracy theory” among certain conservative Christians. These individuals are prone to suspicion of the environmental movement, which they associate with a “new world order and socialism” (Robotham, 1999a, no page). Laura Kern, a professor
of the sociology of religion, concurs. She observers that religious environmentalism has not reached all faith groups. In particular, Christian fundamentalists regard the “environmental movement with disdain” (Robotham, 1999a).

It is important to recognize that this is not true of all conservative groups. A number of evangelicals have embraced faith-based ecology. The most prominent example being the Evangelical Environmental Network discussed throughout this work.

It is interesting to note that a number of criticisms of faith-based stewardship appear to be driven by economic issues. This is particularly true of the Acton Institute. Sirico, the abovementioned Catholic priest, claims that the partnership between the “radical environmental movement and the faith community” is “tragically unreflective” (Motavalli, 2002, no page). Making the dominion argument, he claims that all animals are subordinate to humans and creation is to be used for our benefit (no page). Sirico’s interpretation of dominion is that gives humans “a large degree of prudential discretion in how he uses his authority” (Motavalli). Of course, it might be argued that this discretion is just what has caused the environmental problems we now face.

Continuing this line of thought, Sirico (1997) makes further claims against faith-based stewardship. He suggests that perhaps the current interest in environmental concerns is not the result of application of religious teachings. Instead, religious groups are attempting to "fit in with and be relevant to public life (no page)." Sirico in fact agrees with White, at least in part. Citing a lecture, which preceded the Science article, Sirico states that White’s “presentation at least has the merit of clarity and even some degree of honesty” (no page). He claims that White was correct in his assumption that man is separate and higher than nature.
Sirico (1997) is of the opinion that eco-theology is in fact contrary to Christianity (no page). According to him White and others understood that “there is something at the very heart of Christianity than runs counter to… theology and… politics” which considers the rights and value of nature independent of humans (no page). It should be noted that Sirico advocates three themes to guide people: an appreciation of private property, the value of the free market and the “justice” of accumulating wealth (no page). Among those who support religious environmentalism, these are the very principles they warn against. This position, and it is not clear how wide spread it is, certainly supports the notion that religion has been co-opted by material pursuits.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that a number of the criticisms of environmental churches are political and not religious in nature. Sirico and an associate were incensed at the partnership between the NCC and the Sierra Club. They argued that the partnership served the environmentalists more than Christianity and that the Christian message was lumped with a green political agenda (Motavalli, 2002). And members of the NAE were concerned that their signing of the Oxford Declaration on Global Warming would be interpreted by “friends at the Heritage Foundation and on the political right” as candidacy for the NCC (Motavalli, no page).

Others have invoked the separation of church and state to impede policies they oppose. One example is the aforementioned wolf recovery program in Idaho. House of Representatives member Helen Chenoweth, who opposed the program, accused the Clinton administration of violating the Constitution (Clarke, 1999, page 114). Chenoweth charged that the program promoted “religious environmentalism” and as such was a violation of the constitution (Clarke, 114).
As I have already noted there certainly was a spiritual element to the program, but it appeared to come from the Nez Perce tribe and not the federal government. This did not deter Chenoweth from referring to the program as a “cloudy mixture of new age mysticism, Native American folklore and primitive Earth worship” (Clarke, 114). She further argued that environmentalism in general was a new religion. One that was having a devastating impact on economic development and liberty (Clarke, 119 – 120). While it is certainly beyond the scope of this study, Chenoweth’s attacks on the wolf program, and specifically the Nez Perce approach to it, raise some interesting questions.

I have already discussed these implications and the questions they raise about the rights of the Nez Perce to practice their religion. Clarke (1999) suggests that Chenoweth’s opposition to the recovery program was in a sense a forced acculturation (121). But as I note, these issues are beyond the focus of this study.

To the dissenters we must add the voice of end times thinkers and still others who see nature as inherently evil and thus not worthy of protection. Derr (in DeWitt, 78) suggests that while creation is God’s and people should affirm that, there is rampant evil in nature. How, he asks, can we say that nature is good when it gives us plagues, storms, disease and ultimately death, all of which, he concludes is not the result of human fallenness? Derr continues that nature is amoral and mindless since it gave us the leukemia that killed his father and sisters (80).

It is unclear from Derr’s arguments what role God plays in this inherent evil since he/she is the creator of nature. It is true that these may be arguments based on emotional personal experiences and it is not clear how wide spread these views are.
Nonetheless, it is an argument worth noting. It is a topic that da Silva addresses in his work on Buddhist environmental ethics. da Silva argues that we cannot achieve a sense of “oneness” with nature if we enter into the woods with lust, anger or fear and doubt (47). He cites one Bernard Williams who claims that humans have two conflicting views of nature. On the one hand is gratitude. On the other hand; terror. (Williams, cited in da Silva, 1998, 47).

Certainly, these questions are not the topic of this study. But it should be stated that it is important to understand how pervasive this view is and how it affects human-nature relations. da Silva posits that we have a fear of nature “based on sense of opposition between nature and humans” (47). Can religion help to ease this fear and tension? I am of the opinion that it can play a role.

Another idea is what Bouma-Prediger terms eschatology (3), but might also be termed end times thinking (Fowler, 45) or fatalism. As the name implies, this group (very often Protestant fundamentalists, according to Fowler) follow the notion that the apocalypse is inevitable, and perhaps even imminent, and therefore there is no practical reason to protect the earth. This mindset was most infamously demonstrated by former secretary of the interior, James Watt, who when questioned on his agency’s environmental position stated that he did not “know many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns” (Bouma-Prediger, 4).

Watt’s actual statements and position have since become contentious (Phillips, 2006, 63), but there is nonetheless, an element within the Christian tradition, which does adhere to this notion. If destruction is inevitable, as this philosophy advocates, then there is no reason to live an ecologically sound life. And while religious scholars
dismiss these end-times believers as a fringe movement, Phillips cautions that even at the fringe this includes as many as 30 million people (64). No small number of these, Phillips suggests, are found in positions of influence in the government.

End times thinking, contends Phillips (2006), has led many Christian fundamentalists to ignore the warnings of global warming. As the end approaches, they “see a joyful ending for themselves” (95). From a policy perspective, the result has been a lack of “far-reaching debate on….global warming” among both fundamentalist politicians and conservatives in general (Phillips, 96). One specific example is demonstrated by the voting patterns of senator Rick Santorum. Asked why he repeatedly supports policies that harm the environment, the senator replied that the natural world is “inconsequential to God’s plan” (Jensen, 2006, 226). Echoing Watt, he then alluded to the coming rapture, stating that nowhere in the Bible does it state America would still be here in 100 years (226).

And others (for example Guth, Kellstedt, Smidt & Green, 1993 and Hand & Van Liere, 1984) note that fundamentalist or evangelical Christians (depending on how denominations are defined in the study) are the least likely to embrace a stewardship approach. Guth, et al argue that there are definite trends in faith-based stewardship, with evangelical Protestants “by far the palest green” (375). The authors found that evangelical Protestants (as opposed to mainline) rarely considered the environment a high priority, do not mention it as a national problem and score negatively on policy questions (375).

Guth et al’s (1993) findings are consistent with Phillips contention that fundamentalist thinking lends itself to anti-environmentalist thinking. They argue that the
“literal biblical worldview is critical” 377). This group takes literally the dominion phrase to exploit. The fundamentalists follow other doctrines, according to the authors, that exacerbate their indifference to the environment, notably, as I have already discussed, end times thinking, or as Guth et al term it, a high degree of supernaturalism (377).

These researchers ultimately concluded that three main factors contributed to “environmental conservatism” within the fundamentalist denominations. These were the two issues already mentioned, biblical literalism and end times thinking, and a third; social pessimism (379).

Hill (1998) who has been cited throughout this work, and who is generally of the mind that the Judeo-Christian tradition does not teach a model of domination also acknowledges the end times thinkers. He never refers to them as such. Instead, he notes, “the Judeo-Christian tradition has often stressed salvation at the expense of creation” (56). He cites Catholicism as being especially concerned with salvation at the expense of a “theology of creation” (56).

While Hill takes a largely positive view of the church and the environment, he does offer that “among the Christian churches, the Catholic church has been slow to address environmental issues”. He charged that the Catholic church remained aloof of White’s claims and “gave little attention to environmental issues” (3). He points to the Second Vatican Council, the “most significant church council in modern times” which did not deal with environmental issues. It should be noted, however that the council took place between 1962 and 1965, prior to White’s article.

Before moving onto those who have embraced the idea of faith-based stewardship, I leave you with the ideas of one final dissenter. His ideas encompass
many of those outlined in this section; suspicion of environmentalists, end times thinking and literal interpretation of the Bible. As, I have stated throughout, I believe that people of faith will have more success spreading an environmental message to skeptics within the religious community than will secular environmentalists. I offer this to suggest that it is unlikely that any secular expert can sway a person of this persuasion.

Asked to explain his skepticism on global warming, a lobbyist at the global climate negotiations, stated that it was all foretold in the Bible (Leggett, 2001, 174). Certainly there would be environmental devastation. But there was good news. This would be short-lived and “idyllic things lay beyond” (174). It was further implied that environmentalists were in fact in league with the Antichrist. As Leggett concluded, “God, Christ, Allah and Buddha – help!” (175).

Let us now leave the naysayers and discuss those in the religious community who have come to see an important role for the church in the environmental movement. I will examine these groups in four categories:

- the academic/theological movement,
- environmentalism in the church hierarchy,
- secular & religious partnerships and
- environmentalism in local churches.

The discussion on the academic movement will serve mostly as a summary since these arguments have largely made up the preceding literature review. In talking about the church hierarchy, I will look at the church leaders (Popes and such prominent individuals). In this section, I will also look at the various groups that have emerged, such as the Evangelical Environmental Network. I will also discuss the partnerships that
have grown between the religious community and secular environmentalists. Finally, I will examine the movement in local churches. This group is of particular interest to this research, dealing with local churches and their sustainability efforts.

This final group, the local churches, will be understood to mean individual churches. Of course many churches are in some way part of the hierarchy, based on their affiliation with their denomination.

**The Faith Based Movement -**

In spite of these dissenters, numerous authors point to a growing and powerful movement. Hoffman notes a number of religious groups who are “being mobilized into social and political action” (122). Similarly, Gottlieb (2006) suggests that large numbers of religious people have taken up the challenges facing the environment. These individuals and groups are both passionate and committed and represent the good news on the environmental front (7). Gottlieb recognizes that this commitment is “not equally true for every religion of every religious person” but that it is “extremely powerful and widespread” (7). And Robotham (1999a) asserts that the faith-based movement is in fact a national trend, one that “could dramatically transform the conservation movement in the 21st century” (no page).

But what is the nature of this growing movement? Is it, as Wieskel (1997) contends, “largely an academic movement “steering the re-evaluation of ideas of “dominion” and stewardship” (23)? In *This Sacred Earth* Gottlieb points to the “enormous literature” concerned with the environment and religion and notes the works
of James Nash and Sally McFague. Is Wieskel correct or is it a predominantly a movement growing from local churches and congregations?

Rabbi Lerner (1998) recognizes that religions have made great strides towards stewardship. But, he argues, there is more to be done. He envisions religious leaders publicly declaring that “despoiling wilderness and polluting the planet are not simply mistaken policies but profound moral failings and, ultimately, desecrations of something holy” (no page). Church leaders should be using their substantial wealth to shape corporate behavior. And churches themselves should be models of good stewardship; recycling, becoming energy efficient, using safe products and bringing attention to environmental justices issues (Lerner, no page).

I would argue that the faith-based movement is a varied one, including both academic and grassroots elements. Sociology professor Kearns seems to concur. She points to “an incredible number of grassroots groups” who are focusing on religion and ecology (Robotham, 1999a, no page). She also suggests that this is more than a grassroots movement, indicating a number of religious schools are now focusing on the issue. And what of the steps that Lerner proposes? Are any of these in fact being utilized? These are the questions I will address in this concluding section.

Whatever the nature of faith-based stewardship, it should be expected to vary between the various denominations and even within denominations. This should not be surprising given that there is no one “eco-theology…among Protestants” and that Protestantism is rich, diverse and complex (Fowler, 1995, 3). This is true not only for Protestantism. As Tanner and Mitchell (2002) note, “most faiths have significant religious subdivisions” (2). They point out that this is true of even the centralized
religions, such as Roman Catholicism and Mormonism. The Eastern religions are more decentralized, with Hinduism lacking any central organization and Buddhism with deep divisions between its philosophical and religious extremes (2).

It was noted that the National Council of Churches (NCC) went through an evolution during the Civil Rights era (Findlay, 1990). The church’s support moved from verbal support to active participation (Findlay, 67 – 68). I suggest that a similar evolution is underway within the faith-based environmental movement. The faith-based movement began with academics and migrated to the church hierarchy. It now is moving into the local churches. I would contend, though, that while much is known about the academic movement, little is known of faith based stewardship in local churches.

I have argued that there is little empirical research on the faith-based movement. There are, however, a few studies which do shed some light on the both the attitudes and practices of both religious people and churches. I offer the findings of these studies before exploring the more anecdotal information available on environmentalism in the various religious groups.

According to the Pew Research Center, there is “a fairly strong consensus across faith traditions on environmental policy” (“Religion and the Environment”, 2004). This is the opposite of many cultural issues, abortion and gay marriage being the most notable, on which many religious groups are divided. Among religious groups conservative Christians and certain minorities show the least support for environmental issues (“Religion and the Environment”).

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Among those who are in favor of environmental protection, the support is robust, with 55% backing strong regulations. This was the result even if regulations resulted in job losses ("Religion and the Environment", 2004). The Pew research found that minority groups (African Americans, and both Latino Catholics and Protestants) showed the lowest support for environmental regulations ("Religion and the Environment"). The researchers conjecture that these lower rates are stem from pre-occupation with more immediate concerns and possibly the fear of job losses. It was also found that within faiths those with approaches that are more traditional were less supportive of environmental regulations ("Religion and the Environment").

In conclusion, the Pew study found that environmental protection is an important issue for religious Americans ("Religion and the Environment", 2004). Despite this support, environmental issues are not considered as serious as other policy matters. In particular, the study notes that "terrorism, the economy, health care and education" are of much more concern to voters and this is true across the religious spectrum ("Religion and the Environment"). The environment does rate higher than social issues, such as gay marriage, expect with white evangelical Christians.

Another Pew study looked at the issue of global warming. Keeter, Smith et al (2007) note that religious people may reject scientific findings if these findings contradict their faith (page 2). They offer evolution as the most contentious issue in this regard. The researchers do note that global warming tends to be one of these contentious issues. While my research is driven by this very conflict and thus the church becomes a key ally, the attitudes of citizens is not the focus of this research. It is valuable to have
some understanding on where people stand on these issues and I therefore present a brief glimpse of religious people’s positions on global warming.

Keeter, Smith et al (2007) found less difference on the question of global warming than other controversial issues. Of all respondents, 79% “believe there is solid evidence that the average temperature of the Earth has been increasing over the past few decades” (Keeter, Smith et al, 2007). Further, in each of the three main religious categories the results were similar; “77% of Catholics; 79% of white mainline Protestants; and 70% of white evangelicals” (page 10).

While large majorities of religious people acknowledge that global warming exists, there is less agreement on how much of a problem it is. Just 29% of evangelicals believe that it is a serious problem (Keeter, Smith et al, 2007). And while Catholics and seculars are significantly higher (both 48%) in no group does a majority see the issue as a serious problem (11).

On the question of the cause of global warming, the majority agrees that the causes are related to human activity. Of the total sample 50% believe that activities such as burning fossil fuels are the cause of global warming (Keeter, Smith et al, 2007). On this question differences exist between the three main religious groups. The secular population lead the way, with 62% citing human causes. Catholics 52%, 48% of mainline Protestants and 37% of evangelicals believe that global warming stems from human activity (Keeter, Smith et al, 2007, page 10).

It should also be noted that the researchers found global warming to be tied more closely to political affiliation, than religion (Keeter, Smith et al, 2007).
The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) conducted a thorough study of religious activities and one of the areas they addressed was environmental concerns. Their findings were very interesting and many are in line with my hypotheses. The ARDA study looked at two topics relevant to my study; conservation and environment.

It was not surprising to read that very few churches were involved in either group of activities. Only 20.8% were involved in “programs to protect the environment” (Hodgkinson, 1992, no page). Interestingly, this number rises to 32.7% when asked whether the church is involved in environmental programs with other community organizations. These same trends were found when the researchers asked about conservation issues.

It is a little disappointing to report that just 15.5% of churches in the study were involved in conservation issues. This is all the more disheartening when one considers that this included projects such as urban “beautification” projects (Hodgkinson, no page). This number increases when the respondents are asked about partnerships or consortiums. Then the number is 22.3% (Hodgkinson, no page).

Of course this data does not tell us who initiated the partnerships or who the partners were or are. This would seem to suggest, however, that churches are more likely to be involved in environmental or conservation programs when it is in partnership with other groups. It is, I think, an interesting question for future researchers.

Before moving onto my research, I will conclude the review of the literature with a discussion on what is known of the environmental in the religious community. I have stated throughout that while much is known, there are still significant gaps in the literature. I would add to this, that what we do know, as the following will demonstrate,
comes to us through media and religious institutions. Thus, there is little in the way of peer reviewed, empirical research.

**The academic/theological movement –**

The growth in faith-based environmental stewardship has taken a number of forms and addresses a variety of issues. What I have termed the academic component is itself quite varied. It includes theological studies in universities and seminaries and dissertation research such as this. The movement addresses a variety of issues from general environmental degradation, to climate change to endangered species. In many cases, it also addresses social justice concerns. Since I would argue the faith-based movement began among theologians and academics, this is where I will begin my discussion of the *Shift in Thinking*. I will not, however, linger too long on this category. Much of these works have been introduced being the crux of the preceding literature review.

As evidence that faith based environmentalism is a growing movement among religious people and scholars I might begin by simply pointing to the reference page of this work. A brief look at the list of authors gives some indication of both the variety and volume of work on the topic. Feldman and Moseley (2002) make a similar claim, noting the growth in institutions and conferences dealing with the question of faith and the environment (5). The authors conclude that these efforts point to a growing consensus that religious institutions should “embrace environmental concerns” (5).

This growing interest is not limited to the Christianity, I have cited works by Native American writers, feminist writers, Jewish, Catholics and Protestants and
evangelical Christians. It could be expanded to include Buddhists and Hindus too. The Dalai Lama, in particular, has been vocal on environmental protection. Since the 1980s, he has made the environment a central theme in his statements. His peace plan for Tibet also includes environmental protection (Gardner, 2003, no page).

My interest is in eco-theology in local churches. Nonetheless the academics and theologians have an important role to play, I would submit. Hill (1998) suggests that it is theologians who have “taught Christians how to build bridges” between their faith and various social issues (4). I have offered that scripture is open to interpretation. Some have interpreted in the spirit of dominion and if a stewardship interpretation is to prevail the work of these theologians will be key.

Furthermore, Hill points out that religion and environmentalism are not implicit. Faith and the environmental “need to be linked” (6). He believes that “there is unlimited richness” which needs to be considered and then applied to the current context (6). As has been stated throughout this work, interpretation of scripture is key. Hill argues that the scriptures are “interpretative” and people have been contemplating these works for thousands of years. What is needed now, posits Hill, is how to apply these writings to the current environmental crisis (7).

Another area where growth in environmental issues can be seen is in educational institutions. Among them is Drew Theological School. The seminary offers programs in “eco-ministry”. The program is aimed at both pastors who want to “green” their congregations and to lay people (Robotham, 1999a). Drew is also a participant in The Green Seminary Initiative. The steering committee includes faculty from Drew, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and Wesley Theological Seminary. The movement is
“designed to foster an ethic of ecological care for God’s Creation on our various seminary campuses” (Theological Education, 2009, no page). In addition to the three aforementioned programs, the initiative has an extensive list of members.

The Harvard series on world religions and ecology is another example of note. The series included more than 800 scholars and environmentalists from the major religions. Participants hailed from 6 continents and brought together the most “diverse spectrum of individuals and institutions ever convened on the topic” (Gardner, 2003, no page). The conferences were noteworthy for a number of reasons. Participants included those from religious studies and institutions and those without religious backgrounds. Among the participants were scientists, ethicists and policymakers. Most importantly, argues Gardner, was the formation of the Forum on Religion and Ecology. The Forum on Religion and Ecology allows religious scholars to maintain contact with scientists and policymakers (no page).

The idea of practicable environmentalism was significant in that it will allow theoretical ideas to become workable solutions. The concept is embodied by Emerson (Albanese, 1997, 30). Unfortunately, Albanese concludes that “Emerson is an almost wholly overlooked resource for present-day environmentalist conversation” (30). I raise the issue of practicality because if one hopes that environmental ethics becomes pervasive, then this is an essential component. So in addition to Emerson, I introduce several eco-theologians who demonstrate, in my opinion, “eminently practicable” ideas.

The first is Joseph Sittler who wisely attempts to avoid the pitfalls of pantheism and nature worship discussed earlier. The next is Rosemary Radford Ruether and finally Albert J. Fritsch, S.J. The former two offer their ideas on how to gain acceptance
of environmental theology, but are essentially academics. Fritsch on the contrary offers a more pragmatic guide on how to live more environmentally soundly on a daily basis. Each is worthy of closer analysis.

Highly respected and a renowned theologian, Sittler (1970) stated that, “[t]he world is not God, but it is God’s” (178). I focus only on the implications embodied in the above statement. The significance of the idea that the world is not God is that it avoids the impression that environmentalism results in nature worship. Given the already stormy relationship between the religious and secular environmental movements it is important, I feel, to avoid associations with pantheism. Certainly, the non-Christian faiths have much to offer, but recruiting Christians to the environmental cause is probably not among their contributions.

Ruether writes from an eco-feminist position and is concerned not only with environmental protection, but improving the lot of oppressed and subjugated peoples. Bouma-Prediger points to the unique approach of Ruether to eco-theology that is, her simultaneous consideration of anthropocentrism and androcentrism (27). Hers is an exceptional view that sees the wholeness of all things, which breaks the divisions between humans and nature. Without delving too deeply into Ruether’s writings these ties between oppressed non-humans and oppressed peoples is central to her proposed solutions.

I propose that Ruether’s solutions are practical because she addresses not only nature’s abuse, but the suffering of people. The question of environmental justice is raised by several of the denominations that have begun to address environmental
issues. Thus, Ruether’s focus on the well-being of both people and nature is an important contribution to the environmental and the eco-theology movement.

Albert Fritsch is a Jesuit priest, an environmental ethicist and scientist (Carroll, Brockelman & Westfall, 227) and in addition to his numerous academic writings, he has authored *Earth Healing Guide*, which he hopes will “extend the ecological discussion to include deepening and more conscious levels of concrete applications” (125). It is literally a guide on how to live “green” from edible landscaping, to conservation, to renewable energy.

These various shifts in thinking should certainly offer hope that there is in fact a “greening of theology”, but it would be inaccurate to assume that this attitude is pervasive. For example, Barnette (1972) notes that the Christian dictionary of ethics, which is purported to cover the entire field of ethics, made no mention on ecological issues (35 - 36). Furthermore, much of the writings on the topic focus on the ways in which religion has embraced environmentalism. As such, apart from a few dissenting thoughts, there is not much written on the still “un-greened”. Fowler points to the inherent conflict that still exists between the larger secular environmental movement and its religious counterpart (19).

**Environmentalism in the Church Hierarchy –**

It is perhaps within the church hierarchy that religious environmentalism is most visible. It is from the hierarchy that declarations from Popes and Patriarchs are issued. These directives drive the actions, at least in theory, of the nation’s congregations. It is at this level where groups such as the EEN and NRPE operate and disseminate
information. While there is some overlap between the hierarchy and local congregations I will attempt to differentiate the two groups.

Greenberg (2000) has suggested that “political communication” in the church is of two kinds; “promoting and facilitating civic engagement and community outreach” (382). In the preceding sections, I have presented a variety of theories on why the church should and how it might become involved in the environmental policy debate. I presented historical examples of church involvement in social movements.

I conclude this literature review with a look at where the church is right now in its role of activist. Through the examples, it will be evident that the church is engaging in both forms of communication presented by Greenberg. While we know too little, I would offer, there are some encouraging signs that the church is indeed becoming an active participant in the environmental movement. This is particularly true within the church hierarchy.

I will begin this discussion of the church hierarchy with a brief look at the policies on various denominations, since it would seem that these polices would inform much of what occurs throughout the Christian community. Given the literature that I have presented, I anticipated that sustainability would feature prominently in the literature of governing bodies of each denomination. This is largely not the case. I will start with the Catholic Church, because I found it an interesting example.

I have noted that the Catholic Church receives mixed reviews on its sustainability efforts. It was particularly interesting to note that there is nothing to be found on the Vatican website on sustainability. A search of the website will lead one to a few speeches/lectures on sustainability. But there is nothing in plain sight which promotes
the ideals of sustainably. This struck me as peculiar given that the Vatican is striving to be the first carbon neutral state and that both the current and former Popes have made the environment key issues.

The website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) offers a slightly more hopeful picture. The USCCB does offer insights into environmental justice. The site offers that the “Environmental Justice Program (EJP) calls Catholics to a deeper respect for God’s creation and engages parishes in activities that deal with environmental problems, particularly as they affect the poor” (USCCB EJP, 2010, no page). It should be noted though, that I did some searching for this information. Any visitor to the site, wishing to understand the Catholic position on the environment would not be immediately greeted with any information on this position. This trend is evident in a number of denominations.

The Presbyterian Church of the United States places its environmental programs under the General Assembly and then within Compassion, Peace and Justice. Now while it may take some seeking to find their Environmental Ministry, once there it is quite extensive in its programs. The Environmental Ministry administers an Earth Care Congregations Program. Participants participate in certain activities and projects and become certified as green congregations. Additionally, the Environmental Ministry produces and distributes environmental resources, facilitates a “network of Stewardship of Creation Enablers”, works with the WCC regarding climate change negotiations and promotes the EPA Energy Star for Congregations program (Environmental Ministries, 2010, no page).
Somewhat more challenging to navigate is the website of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The SBC does, in fact, have a modest statement on stewardship. But with a little investigative work, the SBC actually provides a number of resources on faith and the environment.

These results were as I had anticipated. While numerous denominations have environmental programs, these programs are not the central focus of the church’s work. Further, the programs do vary between denominations. And while a visitor to their sites might not immediately be met with messages of sustainability and stewardship, these messages are there and in most cases are quite thorough and extensive.

A number of the denominations, in keeping with the idea that environmental issues are related to questions of justice, address environmental concerns along with social justice. Among the Ministries and Programs of the Presbyterian Church of the United States is an Environmental Ministry. The Ministry offers a number of resources to congregations “active in Earth Care or interested in becoming more involved in being stewards of God’s earth” (Environmental Ministries, 2010, no page). Looking beyond the policies and resources provided on official sites, let us look at what denominations and religious groups are actively doing in the environmental movement.

Robotham (1999a) and Motavalli (2002) both cite the formation of the “National Religious Partnership for the Environment” (NRPE) as a turning point in the faith-based environmental movement. The group consists of, among others, the U.S. Catholic Conference, National Council of Churches of Christ, the Coalition of the Environment and Jewish Life and the Evangelical Environmental Network (Robotham, no page). And as Robotham (1999a) notes, it is not just the liberal and mainline churches that are
involved. In fact, he concludes, “much of the impetus has come from the evangelical community”. It was, after all, evangelicals who lobbied Congress to save the Endangered Species Act (Hoffman, 2000, 122).

Fowler notes that there has been a greening of Protestant thought, with “denominational elites, clergy and bureaucrats” leading the way (13). This top down situation is evident not only within Protestantism. Carroll, Brockelman & Westfall (1997), speaking of religion in general, suggest there is a move towards “environmental theology” and that this will be “one of the most significant paradigm shifts in theology this century” (2). Their findings support the idea that, at least thus far, this shift has occurred in the upper echelons of religious intuitions. They note that groups such as World Council of Churches, the U.S. Catholic Conference and Interfaith Council of the United Nations have realized the enormity of the environmental problem and have made addressing these problems a “top priority” (2).

Once again demonstrating that eco-theology is not limited to the United States, several Bishop’s conferences have begun to address environmental concerns. These include the United States, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala (Hill, 1998, 3). In 1995 and again in 1997 the Council of European Bishops issued a joint statement with the leaders of Protestant churches (Hill, 3).

Hill (1998) proposes that the Catholic Church has been slow to address environmental concerns. The Second Vatican Council, the “most significant church council in modern times,” did not address environmental issues (3). Hill further claims that there is “little urgency among many Catholic biblical scholars, systematic theologians, and moralists to address the present environmental crisis” (3). Despite
these criticisms, the Catholic Church, at least at the upper levels, has taken steps to address environmental problems. Their programs can be found from the Vatican to U.S. Diocese and Bishops around the world and range in scope from social justice issues to energy efficiency.

The United States Catholic Conference’s Environmental Justice Program recognizes that poor and minority neighborhoods often bear an inordinately high burden of pollution (Motavalli, 2002, no page). In an attempt to alleviate this burden the environmental justice program focuses on environmental programs that benefit the poor. Grants are awarded to parishes to assist in reusing brownfields, educating the communities about the effects of toxic emissions and training teachers in stewardship practices (Motavalli). Over 20,000 of these kits have been sent to parishes across the country (Motavalli).

The Catholic Church’s efforts are aimed at educating Catholics and at reducing the church’s environmental footprint (Stone, 2008). Among the environmental steps, the Vatican purchases carbon credits and uses renewable energy to offset its emissions, making it the only carbon neutral state. The Vatican has installed solar panels and planted trees to further offset its emissions (Stone).

The two most recent Popes have both offered their voices to the environmental movement. And they are not alone. Bartholomew I, Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church, has declared that, “to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin” (Motavalli, 2002, no page). Pope John Paul II addressed environmental concerns in the 1990s, but it is his successor who has “embraced environmentalism (Stone, 2008, no page). Dubbed The Green Pope by certain commentators (Stone) Benedict XVI is
using religious teachings to “urge Roman Catholics to take care of the earth” (Stone). The environment has become central to his teaching and policies.

Under Benedict, the Vatican has hosted a conference on climate change where the pontiff called on “global citizens” to focus on sustainable development (Stone). He has further stated that the earth’s resources have been used for exploitation. Benedict’s message is interesting in that it ties social justice to the environment, but also calls for the protection on the environment for its own sake or more accurately as a part of God’s creation. For example, under Benedict pollution is now a sin for which Catholics must atone (Stone). The Vatican argues that social justice issues are closely tied to the environmental movement and how “green” one’s lifestyle is, often affects the poorest communities of the world (Stone).

Beyond the Catholic Church and groups such as EEN, the examples of resolutions and environmental programs are numerous. For example, the Episcopal Diocese of California adopted a resolution instructing all Episcopal churches in California to buy clean, renewable energy (Gardner, 2003, no page). Episcopal Power and Light (EP&L), part of the Regeneration Project, promotes green energy and energy efficiency. Reverend Sally Bingham realized that energy deregulation provided an opportunity for the state’s Episcopalians “to choose energy generated from renewable sources, such as wind, geothermal, and biomass” (Gardner, 2003, no page).

Members are encouraged to perform energy audits of their facilities (Gardner, 2003, no page). Also affiliated with the Regeneration Project is California Interfaith Power and Light. This advocacy group promotes renewable energy. The Regeneration Project is now found in seven states. And Gardner suggests, “it could have a substantial
effect on energy consumption patterns if adopted by religious groups and adherents nationwide” (no page).

The Presbyterian Church has begun to address environmental concerns. Beginning in 1991 the Presbyterian Church “placed environmental concerns directly into the church canon”. Thus, it is now a “sin to ‘threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care’” (Hoffman, 2000, 121 - 122).

Hoffman (2000) presents a number of examples of churches organizing to initiate environmental changes. He suggests that religious leaders of various faiths are working together and independently to shape the environmental question as a moral and hence a religious issue. A few of the examples; as already noted, evangelical groups rallied for reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act. These groups question Congress’s attempt to “‘sink’” the modern day “‘Noah’s Ark'” (Hoffman, 122). The National Council of Churches wrote letters to President Clinton urging him to have the Kyoto Protocol implemented and pledging to work towards that end. Also regarding the Kyoto Protocol, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment promised to lobby U.S. senators to support the treaty (122).

In addition to tackling general environmental concerns, such as reduced consumption or sustainability, specific issues are also being addressed. These are often localized issues such as the Chesapeake Bay or in the case of Appalachia, mountaintop removal (MTR). MTR is being tackled both at the local level and by national groups, let us look at some of the programs that are in place to try and stop the practice.

The National Council of Churches has made mountaintop removal one of its environmental and social causes. In 2009, the NCC hosted a candlelight vigil to
commemorate the anniversary of the signing of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act and to “remember the destruction caused by mountaintop removal” (Jenks, 2009, no page). The stated “purpose of the rally is to remember the nearly 500 mountains already destroyed by mountaintop removal mining and to have people of faith call upon the federal government to end this destructive practice” (Jenks).

The NCC focuses not just on the environmental devastation of MTR but also on the impact to the local communities. Jordan Blevins, Coordinator of Poverty Initiatives for the National Council of Churches, notes the pollution of rivers, clear cutting of forests and also notes that the sludge dams threaten local communities and have contaminated drinking water (Jenks, 2009). Blevins continues, “the candlelight vigil will remember the impacts of this practice to both God’s people and God’s Creation” (Jenks).

The NCC is not the only faith group speaking out against mountaintop removal. The Mountaintop Removal Action and Resource Center notes several Christian denominations that have condemned the practice as “a blight on God’s creation” (Resolutions of Faith). The following churches have issued resolutions calling for an end to mountaintop mining in Appalachia: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Episcopal Church, United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, Unitarian Universalist Association, Religious Society of Friends (Resolutions of Faith). The resolutions vary in depth and in actions to be taken but they each acknowledge that the practice is harmful to both people and nature and that steps should be taken to end MTR.

These various resolutions differ in their small ways, but each highlights similar points. Most condemn MTR and call for an end to the practice and enforcement of
existing laws. All of the resolutions point to the environmental destruction caused by MTR. Furthermore, each notes the deleterious effects the practice has on the economies and societies of Appalachia (Resolutions of Faith). A number of the groups highlight the social justices implications. In its call for a ban on MTR, the Episcopal Church appeals for an end to environmental racism such as “locating polluting industries disproportionately near neighborhoods inhabited by people of color or the poor” (Resolutions of Faith).

To varying degrees, each of the groups actively engages the government to halt MTR. Several, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church, encourage local churches to contact appropriate legislators to call for laws that would ban MTR (Resolutions of Faith). The Washington office of the Episcopal Church monitors policy on MTR and issues alerts. The United Methodist Church notes that the long-term effects are “unstudied and unknown” and calls upon governmental agencies to end MTR until the long-term effects are known. Several of the groups have voiced support for the passage of H. R. 2719, which would potentially reduce the effects of MTR by barring coal companies from dumping waste into nearby streams and valleys (Resolutions of Faith).

The Unitarian Universalist Association’s resolution makes all these points. It is perhaps the most cogent. The Unitarian Universalist resolution recognizes that MTR devastates environments, economies and cultures. It notes that the people and environments of Appalachia are being exploited for the benefit of those across the United States.

Furthermore, it notes that by providing cheap coal MTR hinders energy conservation because people are not forced to pay the true costs of their energy. The
Unitarian Universalists call upon their members to petition their elected officials to support H. R. 2719. It further encourages members to petition the appropriate officials to suspend and refuse permits for MTR and to engage in discussions with health officials on the effects of MTR on human communities. It also calls for fines for those who violate environmental laws and encourages education on alternative mining methods and the impacts of these choices on local communities (Resolutions of Faith).

As the issue of mountaintop removal was taken up by the Tennessee legislature, religious groups weighed in. While much of that effort is discussed as an effort of local churches, the church hierarchy in the state took up the cause. The bill, referred to as the Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act, would ban MTR at elevations higher than 2000 feet (Barrett, 2009, no page). According to members of LEAF⁴ both the Catholic Church in Tennessee and both of the state’s Methodist bishops support the bill. The Catholic Church has, according to LEAF, adopted creation care as one of the social justice issues it advances (Barrett).

Another issue that is gaining religious attention, albeit modest, is the health of the Chesapeake Bay. This is of particular interest to this study. The NCC has issued *Stewards of the Bay: A Toolkit for Congregations in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*. The guidebook explains the ecology of the Bay, suggests projects and is free to churches interested in creation care (Lutz, 2006, no page). The guidebook was a result, in part, of an earlier NCC conference on water resources. Participants included representative of various denominations from Virginia, Maryland and Washington DC.

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⁴ Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship (LEAF), the primary lobbying force behind the bill (Barrett, 2009).
Hosted by the NCC the conference was funded by a number of environmental groups, including the Chesapeake Bay Trust, the Environmental Leadership Program, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The National Council of Churches has not limited its environmental concerns and activities to the United States. It also made its voice heard during international climate negotiations. The NCC was a participant in climate negotiations leading up to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. During negotiations in Geneva in 1991, the NCC declared that concern for the environment was growing within churches. They implored industrialized nations to set targets to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases (Leggett, 2001, 73).

**Secular and Religious Partnerships –**

Gottlieb (2004) suggests that a re-evaluation of the church and nature must come not only from the religious community. He states that it must come from the secular environmental movement too. This latter group has recognized that they have “common cause with communities of faith” (19). This partnership is possible, Gottlieb argues, because the politics of nature are “inescapably ‘spiritual’” (19). In addition to seeing a growth in faith-based activities, we are indeed witnessing partnerships between the secular and the religious environmental communities.

Gottlieb (2004) finds it, rightly I think, heartening that the Sierra Club and National Council of Churches would co-sponsor an advertisement to resist oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (19). It is an important shift. While environmental
groups have resources that span continents, religions offer the messages of compassion, humility, love and the pursuit of justice (20).

The Harvard series noted earlier and cited throughout this work are demonstrative of the partnerships that are emerging. Both religious and non-religious individuals participated. And at the conclusion of the conferences, the Forum on Religion and Ecology was founded. Thus, religious and secular environmentalists can continue the dialogue begun at the conferences.

Gardner (2002) concludes that through the 1990s alliances between religious and secular groups “blossomed” (5 – 6). I have already presented the 2002 collaboration between the Sierra Club and the National Council of Churches to protect ANWR (Gardner, 2002, 7). Already discussed was the Shareholder Action Network, which ensures ICCR support before embarking on any campaign.

Another example are the meetings organized by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The Patriarch gathers "prominent scientists, journalists, and religious leaders for week-long, on-site symposia focusing on water-related environmental issues" (Gardner, 2002, 6).

The North American Coalition on Religion and Ecology (NACRE) has paired with the Commonwealth Energy Corporation (Hoffman, 2000, 122). The two partnered to form “the Greensmart Renewable Energy Project. The goal of which was to “promote the benefits of ‘green power’” (122). NACRE reached out to both religious and other non-profits to encourage the use of electricity generated by renewable energy (122).

Considering a larger, more global scale we find programs such as the Earth Charter Initiative. The goal of this global network of national and city governments,
universities, businesses, individuals and faith groups, is to “develop a code of ethics and ideals…that will eventually be submitted to the United Nations for ratification” (A Buddhist – Christian Contribution, 1997, 2).

The mission of the organization is to promote sustainability. The members of the Earth Charter further envision “a global society founded on a shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life” (The Earth Charter Initiative, 2009, no page). This would be described as a religious movement. Instead the group has reached out to religious institutions to include the Charter in their efforts to create a more peaceful, just world. And in writing the Charter, religious organizations were consulted for their input ((A Buddhist – Christian Contribution).

While partnerships are growing, these are not without conflicts. It is noteworthy that despite his positive messages some have argued that the Pope does not value earth in and of itself and certainly not of equal value to humans. As such, the solutions he proposes tend toward human concerns. And he is unlikely, some argue, to endorse measures that reduce or limit human populations or limit human use of natural resources (Stone, 2008). Others, however, disagree with this assessment, stating that the “Catholic church is no longer split between those who advocate development and those who say that the environment is the priority” (Vidal, 2007 & Kern, 2007, no page).

What this means for secular and faith-based partnerships remains to be seen. But as Robotham (1999a) notes, the two parties need not agree on every issue to work successfully. Laurel Kearns, a sociology professor, recognizes that tensions exist not only between secular and religious groups, but also between the various
denominations. But she remains optimistic that the faith-based movement can persevere (Robotham, 1999a).

Others are similarly optimistic. Peter Bakken, of the Au Sable Institute, points out that members of the Evangelical Environmental Network are “not a bunch of renegade liberals” (Robotham, 1999a). While they are concerned with environmental issues, they take a more conservative stance on issues such as abortion.

Gardner (2003) claims that while the partnership between environmental organizations and Christian churches is surprising, they might be an emerging trend. He further argues that religious institutions, from large centralized faiths to local tribal groups are beginning to see the environmental crisis “the defining challenge of our age” (Gardener, 2003).

To conclude this literature review I will now explore the movement in local churches across the country. What is occurring in local churches across the country? This is, of course, of particular import for this study.

**Environmentalism in Local Churches –**

I offer this concluding section to demonstrate the various ways in which local churches have become involved in the environmental movement. It is my feeling that too little is known about the faith-based movement at the local level. Perhaps this is so, because as Fowler argues, the greening of faith has been an institutional occurrence most evident at the elite level (13). Given that this research is concerned with local churches it is important to investigate what, if anything, is occurring in local congregations. Much like the church evolved into an active civil rights campaigner, so
too is the stewardship church evolving. This section will explore how the church is moving from discussions to action. This discussion will also serve to demonstrate that there is a wide range of possible activities in which the church can participate.

Motavalli (2002, no page) opines that while environmentalism was garnering the attention of the church elites, such as Popes and Patriarchs, a movement was afoot in local congregations. Rebecca Gould, a professor of religion and environmental studies, echoes his sentiments. While theological arguments and statements are necessary, she argues the average congregation must be able to connect those to their own situations (Motavalli). Declarations, such as those issued by John Paul serve as a call to action for local congregations. Both Gould and Motavalli assert that local congregations are embracing environmental concerns. Motavalli argues that it is at the grassroots level where the faith-based movement will be advanced (no page).

Djupe and Gilbert (2002) were similarly concerned with whether or not the clergy was involved with “important political questions of the day” (597). Their research found that more than 90% of their respondents discussed social justice issues. Environmental issues were addressed by 93% of the respondents (598). We can infer that the clergy are willing to “take a stand on important issues, connecting their faith and public policy” (598). It should be noted, of course that these denominations are considered “firmly in the mainline Protestant camp” (Djupe & Gilbert, 2002, 597).

Many of the examples presented in this section will deal with isolated activities, that is a church in Maryland or another in Tennessee taking steps to reduce their environmental impact. Perhaps the most interesting finding is that most of the examples I present are spurred some immediate environmental concern, whether hazardous
wastes or mountaintop removal. A number of churches are addressing problems with the Chesapeake Bay (hereafter The Bay). Another issue that receives a fair deal of attention is mountaintop removal. These are issues that directly affect the communities, which raises questions for future researchers. I will return to this in the discussion on future research studies. For now let us look at some of the faith based activities going on across the country.

Members of the Maryland Presbyterian Church, just outside of Baltimore, have formed an environmental stewardship committee. They are exploring how the congregation can help restore the Bay. They meet regularly to nurture the four acres of woods surrounding their church” (Lutz, 2006, no page). In addition, members formed a group to study their “spiritual relationship to the Earth”. Among the projects they created: removing invasive species from the church grounds, developing plans to reduce storm water runoff, updating building to increase energy efficiency and publishing an “Eco-Tips” section in the newsletter (Lutz).

In Mississippi, Jesus People Against Pollution surveyed people affected by dioxin and subsequently forced Superfund clean ups. In Detroit the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart plant flowers and trees and tend community gardens on the site of a former crack house. And in upstate New York, the local church adopted a creek, winning it a protected habitat designation (Motavalli, 2002).

In Seattle the local effort is co-ordinated by the Earth Ministry. The group recruited “colleagues in 90 mainline Christian churches in the Puget Sound area” (Motavalli, 200). The members participate in hikes and stream restorations and “greenings” of their churches (Motavalli).
The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility’s (ICCR) efforts to use shareholder wealth to affect change has already been discussed. But this large group is not alone in that endeavor. Several nuns have attempted to change corporate behavior using their voice as shareholders. At a recent meeting of Massey Energy’s board of directors, several “shareholding environmental critics” questioned the company’s environmental record. Specifically the group was concerned about the practice of mountaintop mining. These sisters are a far cry from the radical activists associated with protesters of MTR (Shnayerson, 2008, 207).

Mountaintop mining is an issue that has received its fair share of attention, as I have noted. But Massey Energy is not the only company to be called to task by shareholding nuns. As shareholders of Dow Chemical, the nuns at Detroit's Sisters of Mercy used that position to bring attention to the effects of the chemicals on children’s health (Scheer, 2004, no page). The sisters asked for a vote by shareholders on whether the company should stop production of the chemicals. Although, the effort ultimately failed, approximately 5% of shareholders supported their resolution (Scheer).

Some (Cone & Baker-Fletcher in Hessel, 1985) argue that the black church must do more to reconnect with earth and spirit (Baker-Fletcher cited in Cone, 26). There is some evidence to suggest that African American churches are taking the lead on uniting church elites, grassroots activists and the secular environmental movement. One example is the case of Warren County, North Carolina. The Warren County case dates to 1982 and supports the claim that, “black people in particular have a long-standing history of involvement in environmental justice efforts within and beyond black-faith communities” (Wimberly and Crawford, 223). In an effort to block a toxic waste dump, a
group of black churchwomen lay their bodies in the road to impede the dump truck carrying the PCBs (Cone in Hessel, 27).

The question that must be raised is whether this was an act sanctioned by the church or simply an act by members of the church. It is in fact unclear whether the church was a leader on the issue or followed the lead of its congregation. It is also possible that the church merely provided the “free space” noted earlier. This free space perhaps allowed the protesters the venue to organize. Although the efforts to block the landfill were unsuccessful, this was nonetheless an important moment.

In a similar case, Arp & Boeckelman (1997) point to a number of grassroots organizations in Louisiana who fought environmental racism in an area “disproportionately impacted by…permitting and expansion of hazardous waste and chemical facilities (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1993, 63, cited in Arp and Boeckelman). Although these groups met in churches, they were not affiliated with the church (260). But it does point to the aforementioned benefit of people meeting through religious institutions and using church resources to organize. The incident gained the interest of the civil rights movement and the black church and was an impetus for the creation of the national environmental justice movement (Cone, 27). An additional outcome was the 1987 “Report on Race and Toxic Wastes in the United States”, conducted by the United Church Commission of Racial Justice (Cone, 27).

I have previously noted that a number of denominations have taken up the issue of mountaintop removal. It is an issue that received attention from the both the church hierarchy and local churches. Barrett (2009) points to Knoxville’s Concord United Methodist Church, which has taken up the issue of mountaintop removal, among other
environmental issues. The church has a “Church in Society Team” which aims to educate the congregation on social issues. The church invited Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship (LEAF) to give a presentation to its members. And while Concord makes clear that its goal is to educate and that it does not endorse LEAF’s positions the presentations were informative and educational. Concord representatives state that they have encouraged members to contact legislators and “know what has been happening” (Barnett).

While it does not support any particular position and strives only to educate, the church is itself taking further environmental actions. Concord is in the “process of designing a new green church, and makes recycling and environmental issues a part of its regular programming” (Barnett, 2009).

Another example of local churches opposing mountaintop removal comes from Kentucky. The Catholic Committee of Appalachia and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth\(^5\) arranged a tour of sites of mountaintop removal for religious leaders from Kentucky and Evangelical leaders from across the United States (Mountaintop Removal, 2007, no page). The result of the visit was The Interfaith Statement on Mountaintop Removal, which encourages members of all faiths to take action to end MTR.

As with the resolutions noted earlier, the declaration cites the damage done to communities and the environment. As with the statement of the Unitarian Universalists

\(^5\) “a community of people taking action for justice. We work with people to organize in their home communities and across the state. We help everyday community members become extraordinary community leaders. We support community leaders as they build effective organizations. Together, we win important issue campaigns” [http://www.kftc.org/](http://www.kftc.org/)
the signatories noted the contrast of extreme poverty in the area and the wealth of coal companies and their (our) complicity with our demand for cheap energy (Mountaintop Removal, 2007). The declaration goes on to state that the protection of creation is a spiritual act and that people are to be the “responsible stewards” of God’s creation (Mountaintop Removal, 2007).

The declaration is important, because it touches on a number of practical issues. Specifically, it notes that the covenant with God includes all living creatures and that use of the earth must be done with the common good in mind. This must include future generations who will be impacted by our choices. While it is mindful that progress must not be stunted the declaration notes that we practice “reckless patterns of consumption”. Furthermore, it calls on society to “reject the false dichotomy of jobs versus the environment” (Mountaintop Removal, 2007).

As a result of their tour, the group makes the following pledges: to examine their own practices and how they contribute to MTR by demanding cheap energy. The group concedes that their “wasteful and extravagant lifestyle” contributes to the practice of MTR and that their consumption “unexamined and often frivolous” has consequences for the people of Appalachia (Mountaintop Removal, 2007). They pledge also to include discussions of MTR into larger environmental concerns, such as global warming. They further undertake to vote against mountaintop removal.

Through community meetings and churches they vow to increase awareness of MTR and following that, to use the political process to “encourage our elected officials to enforce fully the existing regulations that ensure clean water and air, while we join others demanding a ban of mountaintop removal as a method of mining” (Mountaintop Removal, 2007).
Removal, 2007). Finally, the group pledged that they would, in their own lives as people of faith, make this a spiritual issue. This is call to engage “people’s conscience towards moral action” (Mountaintop Removal, 2007).

This is in keeping with the thoughts of Thomas Berry, who suggests that what is needed “is a comprehensive reevaluation of human-earth relations” (Tucker and Grim, 1998, no page). Berry realizes that this will require “major economic and political changes” and we will need to adopt worldviews contrary to those “which have captured the imagination of contemporary industrialized societies”. Views, he contends, “that view nature as a commodity to be exploited” (Tucker and Grim, no page).

My own research was shaped by the efforts of Susan Drake Emmerich with the Watermen of Tangier Island (VA). Emmerich worked with the Tangier community to develop a “biblically-based environmental stewardship initiative” (Emmerich, 2001). Through the program, 56 watermen pledged to the “Watermen’s Stewardship Covenant”. The pledge was taken at a meeting of the island’s two churches. That was followed with community meetings and the establishment of Tangier Watermen’s Stewardship for the Chesapeake (TaSC); a non-profit devoted to increasing environmental awareness, economic stewardship and preserving the watermen culture (Emmerich, 2001).

Working within the Tangier men’s Christian worldview, and employing a methodology called “action research,” which was developed by and for the Tangier community that helped to overcome the fear, mistrust and misperceptions.

Among the successes of the program: those who joined the program acknowledged a responsibility to God’s creation and a duty to obey various fishery laws.
The watermen undertook to create and implement an economic sustainability plan and created fishery and wetland projects. Finally, a “biblically-based environmental stewardship initiative” was developed. This allowed the community to overcome its suspicion of outside groups and ultimately to forge relationships between the watermen and environmental groups (Emmerich, 2001).

The case of the Tangier watermen is one of a number of diverse initiatives undertaken by churches in recent years. Some have taken more radical steps. Hoffman (2000) offers a number of examples which highlight the various ways the church can become involved. He notes the case of the Sinsinawa Dominican sisters, who operate in United States, Bolivia, Guatemala and Trinidad. In an effort to persuade Occidental Petroleum to reconsider oil exploration on sacred Indian land in Colombia, the Sisters used their stock in the company to gather support for their cause. The tribe had pledged that they would commit suicide if the exploration went ahead. With the help of environmental groups and by way of the Internet, the Sisters were able to convince shareholders to hire independent analysts to examine the potential effects on the stock of the company were the mass suicide to occur (78).

Concerns about mountaintop removal are not the only issues gaining attention in Appalachia. In West Virginia, a number of faith-based groups have partnered with the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition. The group’s goal is to “convince Congress to designate more acres as Wilderness in the Monongahela National Forest” (Averill & Harlan, 2007, 14). The religious groups consider preservation, “a spiritual responsibility” (14).
In Pennsylvania, there is the Interfaith Works, working for environmental stewardship through the formation of partnerships. The goal of the Greater Washington Interfaith Power & Light is to reduce the threat of global warming. It advocates sustainable energy use. Improving the Anacostia river is the driving force of the Religious Partnership for the Anacostia. The Unitarian Universalists have created a “Green Sanctuary certification program” (Lutz).

In 2006, a group of evangelical Christians took up the challenge of global warming. The group is in talks with Republican lawmakers to pass legislation to reduce carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. The group argues that the reduction of said emissions is the responsibility of both government and Christians (Evangelicals launch campaign to fight global warming. No author, 2006). The group’s efforts were supported by advertisements in the New York Times as well as on television and radio.

Target Earth is another interesting group. A national group, they are active on college campuses (Motavalli, 2002, no page), but include “individuals, churches, college fellowships and Christian ministries” (Target Earth, no date). The group is “motivated by the biblical call to be faithful stewards of everything God created-to love our neighbors as ourselves and to care for the earth” (Target Earth).

Based in Tempe, Arizona, Target Earth is active in 15 countries and included in their efforts are “buying up endangered lands, protecting people, saving the jaguar…feeding the hungry, and reforesting ravaged terrain” (Target Earth). The group’s vision is to “involve as many people as possible in the service of the earth and the poor. Our primary emphasis takes people to the most devastated regions of the world”
(Target Earth). Motavalli (2002) notes their alternative spring break programs, which send students abroad to work on environmental projects (no page).

In addition to alternative spring break, the group has an impressive list of programs. These include service and conservation projects. Further, they offer academic training and research to promote “effective service to the earth and the poor” and to “advance the critical understanding of how to best serve the earth” (Target Earth, no page). They also offer community centers to bring people together and have partnered with both environmental groups and other Christian groups. And to “introduce people to the wonders of creation” Target Earth provides outdoor awareness programs.

The preceding literature review should serve as evidence that there is not consensus on what role religion played in environmental destruction, nor on what the Bible directs people to do with regards to nature. There is, however, a significant body of literature that argues religion is a necessary element in the environmental movement. For those who argue for eco-theology, and their number is substantial, the answer is clear. Wieskel, (1997) argues that great complexity exists in the Judeo-Christian tradition and that this allows, and perhaps even encourages, a more ecologically driven theology (pg 23).

It should also be evident that eco-theology may take a number of forms. It may consist of education and community outreach. Alternatively, religious institutions may lobby elected officials to pass legislation. And they might encourage their congregations to do the same. Religious institutions may choose to set an example, by “greening” their operations and facilities.
Thus, environmental stewardship need not be a “one size fits all proposition”. Clergy can adopt a course in line with their denomination’s proclamations that is appropriate for their situation. But little is known about what steps, if any, are being implemented.

While there is a vast body of literature on eco-theology, little of this is dedicated to congregations across the country. As a result, much of the knowledge we have pertains to the church leaders and organizing bodies. There is also a wealth of literature from theologians and academics. So, we might conclude that religions are, at least in theory, supportive of faith-based environmentalism. But we know very little about whether the clergy and congregations have embraced the proclamations offered from the hierarchy.

What is known tends to be anecdotal, with little academic research. Thus, we might know what one church in Tennessee practices of another in West Virginia. But we know little of trends, attitudes and motivations. And it is with that in mind that I propose this research. I will now offer my own methods. This includes a discussion on the specific geographic area I have chosen and why, also, the design of the study and the statistical analysis I will use to examine the data.
METHODOLOGY:

The preceding literature review has, hopefully, served to illustrate the following points:

- The relationship between religion and the environment is a complex one. There is still debate on what role religion, and specifically Christianity, played in the current crisis and what part it should have in the environmental movement.
- In spite of this complexity there is a growing concern among religious individuals and institutions about role religions in the environmental crisis and the solution thereof.
- Little is known on how local congregations have interpreted the religious environmental phenomenon.

Thus, I would argue that there remains a lack of understanding of faith-based stewardship. Guth, et al (1995) for example state that, curiously, the role of religion in shaping environmental attitudes has received little scholarly attention. This is particularly surprising, the authors argue, given the lively debate that exists within the religious community on the question of faith and the environment (365). And while there may be curiosity among scholars and journalists about the growing faith-based environmental movement, “there has been no comparable boom in survey research” (366). I think that this is demonstrated in the discussion of local churches and their environmental programs.

If one looks at environmental stewardship in local churches, the vast majority of sources will be newspaper reporting. Often this reporting is local with little or no
coverage outside of the geographic area. Of course, with the pervasive of the Internet these stories are accessible to people far beyond the local community. There is also a wealth of information on web-logs. What is lacking is scholarly or empirical research. It is my intention to offer something towards the scholarly research in faith based environmental stewardship.

Environmentalists too recognize that exclusion of the religious community might have been detrimental to the movement. Carl Pope declared that the greatest error of the environmental movement is its failure to understand “the mission of religion and the churches in preserving Creation” (Robotham, 1999a, no page). And as I have already indicated, little is known about environmentalism within local churches (Fowler, 23). With this study, I will explore the nature of faith-based stewardship, not in the upper echelons of religions, but in local churches. Tucker and Williams (1997) similarly acknowledge that the environmental community has not paid enough attention to the value of religion in the movement (xii).

My research is guided by this stated lack of knowledge about eco-theology in local churches (Fowler, 1995, 23). Much of my literature review was concerned with the theoretical and academic issues of stewardship and dominion. While these discussions are important, I think that it is equally important to understand how these theologies are being implemented, if at all. As Motavalli (2002) opines, it is at the grassroots level where the faith-based movement will be advanced (no page).

I am specifically concerned with Christian churches in rural communities. And more specifically two rural communities, with a history of close ties to the land and water surrounding them. It is my hope that this research, in a small way, will contribute to our
knowledge of church activity. Perhaps it will prove useful to those interested in community involvement in restoring the Chesapeake Bay. As Emmerich’s work inspired this study, hopefully this research will lead to further exploration of church initiatives in the Bay watershed and environmentalism in general.

This research will contribute to our growing, but still modest, knowledge of faith-based stewardship. This is my primary goal. But this research may contribute to the larger question of religion and public participation. While much has been written on the subject, the question has been revived as Greenberg (2000) notes. Several authors (Billings and Scott, 1994 and Solle, 1994) recognize that the church’s role as a political actor remains a “central concern” (Billings and Scott, 174).

Let me now explain my own methods and the rationale behind my choices. As has been stated throughout this work, Christianity has the potential to mobilize a large section of the population. I felt it necessary to refine the broad topic of the church into some manageable population. White’s focus was on Christianity and most of this work has been similarly focused.

A look at the literature suggests that even among Christian faiths and more narrowly among the Protestant traditions, there are wide variations and positions on faith-based stewardship. To attempt to explore non-Christian and Christian churches would be a massive undertaking. Furthermore, I am concerned with affecting change, through the policy process and it seemed a logical step to consider the most prevalent denominations. According to a recent Pew survey, Christianity is the leading U.S. religion, with 78.4% of the population (U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2008). This breaks down into 51.3% Protestant and 23.9% Catholic. It seemed necessary to further
limit this substantial population. I therefore limited the study to two Virginia communities, the Eastern Shore and Northern Neck. As I will elucidate in the discussions on the Northern Neck (NN) and the Eastern Shore (ES), both locales have long had strong ties to the land and to the Bay. Given their historical ties to the land and given the current dire conditions of the Bay it is expected that such communities would have a greater awareness of environmental issues. A few words about the Bay are in order.

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the North America and the third largest in the world (General Information, 2010, no page). The Bay stretches from Maryland in the North to Virginia Beach at its southern tip and is approximately 200 miles long. At its widest it is 35 miles wide and just 3.4 miles wide at it narrowest point (General Information, 2010, no page). The Chesapeake Bay watershed covers parts of six states (Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware and New York) and the District of Columbia and the watershed covers 64,000 acres. The population of the Bay watershed is 17 million people and that number is expected to reach 18 million by 2020 (General Information, 2010, no page).

I chose to focus on the Northern Neck and the Eastern because of their proximity to the Bay, which is an important social, cultural and economic resource. Estuaries are important ecosystems and the Bay as the largest estuary in the United States is of particular import. Estuaries are bodies of water where salt and freshwater mix. They are “among the most productive environments on earth” (About the Bay, 2010, no page). Estuaries provide habitats for a multitude of diverse species and thousands of mammal, bird and fish species rely on the Bay “(About the Bay, no page).
Not only local issues should concern the communities of the Eastern Shore and Northern Neck. Both areas are low lying, with large tracts in the flood plain. Thus, these two communities might be expected to have a particular concern for global warming and the potential rise in sea level.

I chose to focus on two rural communities, because I hypothesized that social influences would be more pronounced in smaller communities. But this claim might be further addressed in future research. While the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore share many traits, they are also unique in many ways. I chose these two communities for their differences, as much as for their similarities.

The Northern Neck and Eastern Shore share the resource that is the Chesapeake Bay. Both have historically been closely tied to the Bay, socially, culturally and economically. And as far as the current health of the Bay allows, this remains true. The two communities also have a shared agricultural past. But, as we shall see in the discussions of the two areas, there are some subtle differences between the two. The Northern Neck is beginning to see the effects of migration from northern Virginia and Washington, DC while the Eastern Shore remains more isolated. I will leave that discussion for now and explain my methods.

**Population and Sample:**

The population of this study is the clergy of the Christian churches located on the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore of Virginia. This is a relatively small population. At the time of this study, the entire population numbers 264 churches. The following denominations are represented:
On the Northern Neck:

- Assemblies of God
- Baptist
- Catholic
- Church of Christ
- Church of God
- Episcopal
- Jehovah’s Witness
- Independent, Interdenominational and Non-Denominational Churches
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Pentecostal
- Presbyterian
- Seventh Day Adventist
- Unitarian Universalist

Eastern Shore:

- Baptist
- Catholic
- Church of God
- Episcopal
- Independent, Interdenominational and Non-Denominational Churches
- Jehovah’s Witness
- Lutheran
Methodist – including African Methodist and Independent Methodist

Pentecostal

Presbyterian

Seventh Day Adventist

Given the small population, I determined that sampling would not be necessary. Nor would it produce, in all likelihood, the best results. There are two primary reasons for this. This first relates to the logistics. A key reason to draw a sample is to decrease an unmanageable population. A population of less than 300 subjects is small enough to allow analysis of the entire population. The second reason concerns the rate of return and the already small population size. To draw a sample, would further decrease the potential return rate. In an attempt to ensure the largest possible return rate, I conducted a census of the entire population, rather than drawing a sample.

Population –

To determine who makes up the target population and to gather the necessary contact information I used three resources. The first source I used is the governing body of each church located on the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore. Several denominations – for example Catholic and Baptist - provide contact information for the congregations in the state. This was effective with the larger churches, but using this method, I might have overlooked smaller churches and those that are unaffiliated. I wanted to be sure to include all members of the populations. Therefore, I will utilize two further resources in an effort to ensure that smaller churches are included in the survey.
As a second step, I contacted the Chambers of Commerce and Visitors Bureaus for both areas and requested all churches listed with them. Finally, I referred to local telephone directories. Using these three steps, I hoped that I would minimize the chance of smaller and independent or unaffiliated churches being overlooked. Hopefully, from these three sources I was able to create a comprehensive list of all churches in the area.

Data Collection:

The population was surveyed through mail questionnaire. In an effort to increase return rate, I employed the Dillman method. My first mailing included the questionnaire, pre-paid return envelope and a letter introducing myself and the study. A reminder postcard followed this, approximately one week later. Finally, one week after the postcard was sent, I resent the surveys, again with pre-paid return envelopes. The entire instrument can be found in the Appendices, but was designed to elicit responses to the following broad questions:

- What does the respondent feel should be the church’s role in environmental protection?
- What does the respondent feel should be individual Christian’s role in environmental protection?
- Is the respondent’s church involved in stewardship activities and
- What is the nature of those activities?
- Have they in the past, or would they consider working with environmental groups to encourage stewardship of the Bay?
**Variables:**

**Independent Variables (IV) –**

It was my contention that both location and denomination would affect the types of activities and the attitudes towards environmentalism. These will therefore be used as the independent variables in this study. As I will offer in my discussion on the Northern Neck and the Eastern Shore, I was curious to explore whether the small differences in these communities affect stewardship activities. The second independent variable will be denomination. This is either Catholic or Protestant and those who are independent or unaffiliated will be classified as Neither. A few more words might prove insightful on the classification of the denominations.

Smith’s typology of denominations has, for several years, been the classification tool of choice (Steensland, et al, 2000, 293). While Steensland, et al point to the value of Smith’s scheme, they do note some flaws. The first is the allocation of participants into a denomination, rather than allowing for self-identification (293). To address this I have phrased the questions, such that respondents identify their denomination.

My survey asked two questions on this matter. The first determines whether the respondent is Catholic or Protestant or Neither. The second concerns their approach to the Bible. Specifically, whether the respondents read the scriptures in a strict, literal sense. I elected to use this terminology to avoid the use of the word fundamentalist, which as Steensland, et al (2002) point out has taken on some negative connotations (295). Yet, I suspected that this characteristic will influence the choice to participate in environmental programs.
Furthermore, Steensland, et al suggest that describing religious denominations on a continuum “leads to unclear findings” (295). Thus, on the denomination, my independent variable will be dichotomous rather than continuous, as Smith’s scheme utilized. However, with regards to interpretation the independent variable will be a continuous variable. I will therefore utilize three independent variables; location, denomination and scriptural interpretation.

**Dependent Variables (DV) –**

From the preceding discussion, I offer that the respondent’s attitude towards environmental stewardship and hence the activities of their church are influenced by denomination and location. These variables, attitude and practices, will therefore serve as the dependent variables of this study. I begin with a simple yes-no choice, asking whether the respondent’s church has started any environmental programs.

If they are involved in environmental activities, they were asked to describe these programs. Given the open-ended nature of the question, I created a varied list of activities. Smith (1987) argues that a solution to dealing with “large numbers of small and unordered groups is to create a classification scheme” (Smith, 1987). I will therefore group these activities into several classes.

The classes of activities I used are; *recycling, conserving, energy, education, Bay, elect, other, none* and *missing*. I created these categories based on a number of resources, although not necessarily from the environmental literature. I wanted to be able to differentiate outreach or activist activities from more administrative environment programs.
I had initially considered creating one category for all stewardship endeavors. This would have included recycling, energy efficiency projects and river cleanups, to name just a few. It seemed that such a broad category would not adequately highlight what type of programs have been implemented. So, I created *recycling, energy* (to include all projects related to reducing energy consumption) and *conserve* (which includes projects such as tree plantings and river clean ups).

I created a separate category for projects related to the Chesapeake Bay. To fall into this category the respondents had to explicitly state that it was a Bay project. It is true that river clean ups and tree plantings might address the Bay’s problems, but I was interested to see if any respondents were specifically working on the Bay. These stewardship classifications were created drawing on both my own knowledge and experience of environmental issues and programs and the literature of religion and political activity, albeit not in the environmental context.

The remaining groups, *elect* and *education*, I created using the resources of various denominations and looking at the literature. I have cited the work of Greenberg (2000) who writes of the role religious institutions can play in generating “collective action” (380). Using her work, but not her terminology, I created the *elect* category for those programs, which involve the political realm. The National Council of Churches this year held a candlelight vigil to protest strip-mining in Appalachia. Attending such events fall into this class, as would writing letters to elect officials. While, not necessarily political, these are the actions that are most closely concerned with the policy process and involve engaging elected officials, hence my choice of *elect.*
Education seemed like an essential category, given that “clerical and lay leaders spend an enormous amount of time attempting to inculcate members” on the requirements of living a Christian life (Greenberg, 2000, 281). Education may be in the form of sermons, but other forums exist. These potentially include environmental messages in bible study or giving outside groups access to the congregation (Greenberg, 283).

Finally, I allowed for those activities that would not fit into the above classification, these are described as other. And of course, there are those respondents that have no programs or elected not to answer the question.

A second dependent variable will be the clergy’s attitude toward environmental issues. These questions will be presented in the Likert form. These questions are either agree/disagree type questions or they are numeric rating scales. Both types of questions explore the importance of various issues to the respondents, such as church or individual participation in environmental activities.

I have also explored the respondent’s attitudes towards environmental partnerships. These questions address whether the respondents have worked with environmental groups. Further, I inquired whether they feel it is appropriate to partner with environmental groups and whether this is preferable to starting their own environment programs.

So, to summarize, my dependent variables are; whether or not respondents have started environmental programs and the types of programs. Have they partnered with environmental groups and are partnerships appropriate and effective? Looking at the attitudes, does the church have a role to play in the environmental movement?
All dependent variables will be either nominal or ordinal. In the case of the type of activities, the DV will be nominal. With the questions touching on attitudes, they will be ordinal. This is important when one decides on how to analyze the data. Let me now move onto that discussion.

**Measurement:**

My analysis of the data will be quantitative in nature. The broad subject areas are outlined above. To answer these questions I will use both descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Descriptive Statistics –**

Trochim (2008) suggests that descriptive statistics provide a basic description of data and “form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data” (no page). And so, it is where I began analyzing my data. The first and most basic question I answered is how many of the population are involved in stewardship activities. This can be answered using a distribution and analyzing the frequencies of participation versus non-participation. I elaborated on that by considering whether differences exist between the churches on the Eastern Shore and those on the Northern Neck. I will compare the participation rates from each area.

Descriptive statistics can also be useful in exploring those items pertaining to attitudes, such as the Likert responses on the survey. In this case, it is appropriate to analyze not the mean, but the mode, or most frequent response. Using this approach, I
demonstrated the percentages of respondents who agree or disagree with various positions or practices.

As the name suggests descriptive statistics enable us to describe the data. But from them we cannot reach conclusions such as what the population might think (Trochim, no page). For this we must turn to inferential statistics. Thus, for a more complete analysis of the data I will utilize inferential statistics.

**Inferential Statistics** –

I employed a number of statistical techniques, depending on the nature of the variables. Linear regression was used to analyze continuous variables, for example exploring the relationship between literal interpretation (IV) and what role the church should play in the environmental movement (DV). It is, of course, possible to examine a number of different dependent variables and their relationship with this same independent variable.

Furthermore, the dependent variables should not be continuous. As outlined above, the DVs in this research are either nominal or ordinal. Using the categories of environmental practices explained earlier, it is apparent that the DV will have more than two cases. As such, multinomial logistic regression is a suitable tool (Garson, no page).

Further analysis can be performed on the attitudes of the respondents. Considering the scale responses I examined the correlation between denomination or location and the corresponding attitudes towards stewardship activities. I considered the variables to be ordinal.
For the dichotomous variables, where regression would not be appropriate, I used an ANOVA. Plonsky (2009) states that ANOVA is useful in that it can “provide some unique and relevant information about how variables interact or combine in the effect they have on the DV” (no page). This allowed me to examine not only the effects the IVs have on the DV, but also how they interact with each other. A note on the terminology; Jones (2010) notes that the “two independent variables in a two-way ANOVA are called factors” (no page). I will refer to variables, rather than factors.

Confidentiality:

I employed a number of steps to guarantee the confidentiality of all participants. All surveys will be numbered and all data will be entered using these coded responses. As the lone researcher, I will be the only person in possession of this information. This concern has also shaped the nature of the analysis that I will run. Given the small population and the fact that several of the denominations are represented by only one church, I did not analyze individual denominations. In this way no one church or denomination was identifiable. While this may sacrifice some insights, I felt that it was necessary to protect the privacy of the participating churches.

According to a study in the late 1970s, there were approximately 1187 denominations in the United States (Smith, 1987, no page). Add to this the fact that many of these are “small, obscure, and easily confused” (Smith, no page). Consequently, religion is a difficult variable to use and on which to collect data. Thus, to ensure confidentiality and to deal with the difficulty of classifying denominations, I have
elected to allow the respondents to self identify. I have discussed these issues at length in my explanation of the variables of the study.

As already noted I am the sole researcher and will be the only person to handle the surveys. For data collection purposes, I tracked which surveys have been returned, but in no way will participants be identified. Further, all research was entered in password protected files. Again, I will be the only individual with access to the files. And at the completion of the study, all materials will be destroyed.

**Validity & Reliability:**

Poor precision of measures in research reduces the ability to track changes or characterize relationships between variables, so argues Hopkins (2000, no page). Thus, it is important to create precise measurements and reliability and validity are the tools used to test these concepts. Reliability is a measure of reproducibility; that is whether it measures the same thing over repeated tests. Validity asks whether the instrument measures what it purports to measure.

Reliability is best determined by repeated tests. But as Key (1987) points out repeated testing is often not practical (no page). This would certainly be true in this case. Furthermore, test re-test scenarios are appropriate in experimental research and instances when one expects consistency over time. There are, however, measures, which we might expect to change over time. Drislane and Parkinson (no date) offer political views as one example (no page). This assumed evolution of ideas over time is applicable to this study and as such I will be concerned with internal consistency.
Internal reliability tests questions within the test. This can be achieved by asking similar questions throughout the test. Matching responses to the different questions would indicate reliability. Kay (1987) argues that testing for internal consistency (he recommends the coefficient alpha) is appropriate for “items that have no right answer” such as in the social sciences and where responses are on a scale (no page). Several of the questions on my survey are framed in this way.

Validity, as noted, is the extent to which an instrument measures what it intends to measure. It is my intent to measure the presence of stewardship activities and the nature of these activities in the churches of the NN and ES. I am most concerned with content and construct validity.

Key (1987) states that in order to meet the requirements of content validity the researcher must “identify the universe of content” (no page). I will use the available literature to create the universe of content. Considering examples of church activism currently employed by religious institutions, will allow me to create measures of possible activities. These examples may come in the form of environmental activities and from non-environmental examples.

A second form of validity is construct validity. Key (1987) argues that construct validity requires the researcher to define the construct being measured, in this case stewardship practices. These definitions are a result of researcher observation (no page). As I have already discussed, my construct will be the various categories used to define stewardship. This is based on my review of the literature and examination of how stewardship has been implemented in various religious institutions. I have discussed the
categories that I will use to define environmental practices, including stewardship, activist and education.

To test construct validity, Key (1987) recommends presenting the construct definition to a panel of experts. For the purposes of this study, I defer to my dissertation committee as the experts. With their approval of the definition, I will assume I have met the demands of construct validity.

**Hypotheses:**

Despite the growth in religious environmentalism, I expect to find little participation in the population of this study. While this study will not address the reasons for participation or non-participation, I would conjecture that if there is a lack of participation it is owing to the fact that the church is still finding its role in the environmental movement. As I have stated in preceding sections, in earlier movements, church involvement evolved from verbal support to active participation, but this is beyond the scope of this study.

While I expected limited environmental activity, I did anticipate that there will be some involvement in stewardship activities. I hypothesized that this is dependent on the location of the church and the denomination. Given the findings of Emmerich, suspicion of outsiders and in particular of environmentalists, I suspected that participation and acceptance of environmentalism would be higher on the Northern Neck.

Based on the conclusions of Phillips (2006) and Smith (1987), both cited in this work, I further expected that the more liberal churches would have a more accepting position on faith-based stewardship and might be more active. Phillips has argued that
fundamentalist Christians focus more on the afterlife and as a result have less regard for the environment. And speaking of the liberal churches Smith (1995) notes that they support “social action and progressive reform” and accept secularism and science” (no page). Based on these observations one would expect participation in the faith-based movement from the liberal denominations.

Of course, Greenberg’s (2000) findings should be noted. Cited earlier, she found that the clergy “tend to be more ideologically committed than their members”. The result, she argues is that mainline white Protestant churches have “trouble grappling with political issues in church” (384). Given this, I would expect that participation in these churches will be non-political, perhaps in the form of stewardship activities, such as river cleanups of purchasing energy efficient appliances. I will return to this disconnect between the clergy and the congregation in the future research section.

**Rival Hypotheses:**

It is possible that a church’s participation, or non-participation, in environmental activities might be affected by a number of factors quite apart from religious matters. One possibility is that geographic and social issues might be a factor in stewardship. It is certainly possible that individuals in certain regions of the country demonstrate a stronger environmental ethic, independent of religious affiliation.

It is also possible that the question of religion’s fault is too broad. Perhaps certain religions are inherently more environmentally concerned. The case of Buddhism was noted throughout this work. And it is possible that within Christianity this is true.
Another possible rival hypothesis is that Christianity, and in fact religion in general, is not to blame for the environmental crisis. It must be considered that religion has been subverted to economic growth and it is the pursuit of material wealth that has been the downfall of the environment. I would in fact, argue that this is the most plausible rival hypothesis and it is an issue raised by such scholars as Wieskel (1997). As Wieskel (1997) argues, the pursuit of the “good life’ aggravates our momentous ecological crisis” and furthermore that no end is in sight when the “the prevailing message is that happiness itself is inextricably linked to an ever greater consumption of material goods and energy” (20).

And Dewitt (1997) makes similar claims, although his arguments are more nuanced than I will discuss here (his points have been cited throughout this work). Dewitt argues that “seduction by immediate pleasures and goods of the world alienates people from God and Creation” (90). The environmental crisis, argues Dewitt, is entirely of our own making. We have arrived at this situation because of “arrogance, ignorance, greed, or a combination thereof “(101).

A related argument can be made that the current crisis is not the fault of religion, but illustrates the “tragedy of the commons”. With disregard for the environment, and some would argue our religious duty to protect it, we have endeavored to maximize our proverbial cattle. And the result has been, Hardin predicted, the ruin of the commons.

Further, it can be argued that until recently, in both the secular and religious communities, environmental concerns were dealt with as they arose. As Dewitt points out we have “unprecedented knowledge” (87). But until recently the knowledge we utilized was the knowledge of “technology of exploitation” (81). There might be a host of
reasons for this; perhaps this was appropriate in a world with fewer people or where we lacked the knowledge of the finite nature of the resources we were using.

I see these rival hypotheses not as a hindrance to the current study, but as areas of inquiry for future researchers. As such I hope to pose and answer a research question that will raise questions for other researchers. What might be these future studies? Let me now offer some possible research directions.

**Future Research Directions:**

As I work through this project and considering the rival hypothesis just noted, I think that there are numerous avenues for future research. I think that the ties between economic goals, religion and stewardship would make for interesting research. Particularly, have both religion and environmental protection been sabotaged by the pursuit of economic growth?

This study was limited in scope to the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore of Virginia. Future studies could broaden this to consider the various regions of the country. This research could explore whether stewardship is affected by regional identity or if, in fact, stewardship is tied to one's faith. Furthermore, I focused on a specific environmental concern. It would be interesting to investigate whether such issues have an impact on people's attitudes and participation. The case of mountaintop removal comes to mind.

Given that this study focused only on the main branches of Christianity, that is Catholicism and Protestantism, possible future research could answer the same
research question with regards to the Eastern religions (Hindu, Buddhism, etc.), Judaism or Muslim.

This study was concerned only with whether or not religious leaders are promoting an environmental ethic. Future research might consider the role that religion plays in spurring people to action, particularly with regards to the environment. Similarly, it might be examined whether the church drives environmentalism within the congregation or whether, in fact, it is the people’s beliefs, which spur the church to action. Similarly, future studies could investigate whether the disposition of the congregation affects the clergy’s efforts at sustainability, which others have suggested (for example Greenberg, 2000).

Future research might also consider the impact of faith-based stewardship in the larger policy and environmental movements. If the faith-based movement is in fact a growing phenomenon, what have been its effects on environmental policy? Has the movement spurred increased collaboration between the secular and religious movements and to what effect?

*Significance of the Study:*

Earlier in this work I introduced the argument that much of the environmental crisis is a result of Christianity. A review of the literature suggests that this is a complex assertion. Examples of both positive and negative attitudes exist. A growing school of thought suggests the solution to the environmental problems cannot be based entirely on science and technology. What is needed is an appeal to the moral and spiritual.
Little is understood about environmentalism in the local churches. I, therefore, offer this research to answer that question in one region of Virginia. This is important, I believe, for both policy-makers and members of environmental groups. The relationship between secular environmentalists and the religious community has historically been one of suspicion and tension. As Young (1997) argues; to ensure preservation and community vitality, it is necessary to forge partnerships between local communities, government and civic groups (83). I offer this study as one step towards better understanding of the religious community.

**Limitations of the Current Study:**

The most striking limitation is of course the small population size. I have endeavored to reduce this problem by utilizing the entire population. Nonetheless, it remains that this is but a small group. Related to the small size and an additional limitation is the isolation of the pollution, and in particular the communities on the Eastern Shore.

By design this study considers only the Christian tradition, and specifically only those denominations represented in the chosen locations. Certainly there is much that other faiths offer to this discussion. The study would certainly be enhanced were additional religions included, as this would allow for comparisons between various faiths.

Religion and religious institutions are complex organisms and consensus may not exist within a denomination, let alone across various religions. Regional differences are to be expected, but this study is limited to only one region of the country.
One criticism of this study might be a lack of generalizeability. This is a case study and hence it is difficult to generalize the results to the larger population. There are some benefits, though, to case studies and it has been suggested that transferability might be an appropriate substitute for generalizeability. Let me address these two issues.

It has been argued that the case study approach is effective when examining environmental ethics (Martin-Schramm & Stivers, 2003, 47). The authors note that Christian ethics are easily identified, but difficult to apply to specific situations. Furthermore, while situations might be similar, the context of each makes for “exceptional circumstances” (47). Case studies, then, allow us to apply environmental ethics to specific and diverse situations. Case studies may be useful in applying theoretical ideas into practical actions. So Martin-Schramm & Stivers argue. Thus, encouraging engaged learning (47), and stepping into the shoes of the “various characters” requires moral reflection.

It is acknowledged that the case study approach does have some shortcomings. Martin-Schramm & Stivers (2003) note that by focusing in a specific issues, case studies may overlook broader trends (62). One suggestion to ameliorate this shortcoming is to providing supplemental cases and reading material. This, of course, is achieved with the literature review. Where generalizability is not possible, it might be appropriate to consider the transferability of the study.
THE NORTHERN NECK OF VIRGINIA:

Dubbed the “Garden of Virginia” by George Washington (Virginia Outdoors Plan, 2007, 555) and known as the “river country” by the Powhatans (Burnham & Burnham, 2003, no page), the Northern Neck is one of three peninsulas on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. It is nestled between the Potomac River in the North and the Rappahannock River in the South (The Northern Neck, 2000, 15). In the east, it is bounded by the Chesapeake Bay.

With its strong ties to the English homeland and with a number of prominent settlers, the Northern Neck was, concludes Smith (1969), the “heartland of colonial America”(277). It was the birthplace of George Mason and the Lees of Stratford and of 3 presidents – Washington, Madison and Monroe (277). The Fish and Wildlife Service, of all agencies, notes that “throughout its history, the Rappahannock River has nurtured native Americans, the earliest colonists, and Revolutionary War heroes” (Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge [RRVNWR], 2010, no page). Many of their descendants are still sustained by the river.

The area now known as the Northern Neck is made up of approximately 492,800 land acres and 42,433 water acres (Virginia Outdoors Plan [VOP], 555). It boasts more than 1000 miles of shoreline, 38% of the tidal shoreline in the state (VOP, 555). Historically, however the Northern Neck, once known as the Fairfax Propriety, covered significantly more land. It then consisted of over five million acres (About the Virginia Land Office, 2010, no page) and stretched from the Chesapeake Bay into what is now West Virginia (Weisiger, 2002, no page).
In addition to the five counties included in this study, the Northern Neck then also encompassed Arlington, Augusta, Clarke, Culpepper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Frederick, Greene, Loudoun, Madison, Orange, Page, Prince William, Rappahannock, Shenandoah, Stafford, Warren and Winchester. It also covered the present day “West Virginia counties of Berkeley, Hampshire, Hardy, Jefferson, and Morgan” (Weisiger, no page).

In 1649, the Northern Neck was an unsettled area. King Charles II, exiled in France and with few resources, nonetheless maintained the right to grant land to supporters. Thus, in September 1649 he granted the region to a number of supporters (Grymes, 2010, no page), among them John Culpepper. By 1681 Culpepper had acquired rights to 83% of the land. The remainder belonged to his cousin Alexander. The death of Lord Culpepper saw his 83% passed to his daughter Catherine. The remaining 17% was then controlled by the Fairfax family (Grymes, no page) and one Thomas, fifth Lord of Fairfax, the husband of Catherine. Thus, with Catherine’s marriage to Thomas, the proprietorship was passed to the Fairfax family, where it remained for 90 years (Weisiger, no page).

In 1781, Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax died leaving the proprietorship to his heirs, all British subjects. There is some disagreement on the events that followed. Smith (1969) argues that the Commonwealth “did not challenge the right of his heirs” to hold the land. While Weisiger (2002) states that the Commonwealth initiated “legal proceedings to seize the land” (no page). And Grymes (2010) notes that the colonial government “retained political and legal authority over the Northern Neck” (Grymes, no page).
Further, the governor and General Assembly wanted to retain the right to grant land and collect fees (Grymes, no page).

It seems likely that the decisive lawsuit stems from the activities of speculator David Hunter who was granted 788 acres of “waste and ungranted land” on the Northern Neck (Smith, 282). The legal struggles continued until 1816 at which point the Supreme Court weighed in, ruling Martin versus Hunter that the Commonwealth was in fact the legal owner of the land (Wiesiger, no page).

Figure I - The Fairfax Proprietorship

Retrieved from [www.novahistory.org/Fairfax.html](http://www.novahistory.org/Fairfax.html)

6 A survey of the northern neck of Virginia, being the lands belonging to the Rt. Honourable Thomas Lord Fairfax Baron Cameron, bounded by & within the Bay of Chesapoycke and between the rivers.
The Northern Neck, as we know it today, comprises the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland Counties. By some accounts, King George County is included, but there is some disagreement on this. For example, the Northern Neck Planning District Commission includes only Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland Counties. The Northern Neck Tourism Council includes King George County, as does the Northern Neck Historical Society. And the County labels itself the “Gateway to the Historic Northern Neck” (King George County Administration, 2006).

I wrestled with whether to include it or exclude it. Ultimately I deferred to the County and the Virginia Tourism Corporation, which both include King George in the Northern Neck (Virginia Tourism Corporation, 2006). Thus, for the purposes of this research, King George County will be considered a part of the Northern Neck.

Data from the last census (2000) puts the population of the five counties at 66,156. King George is the most populous county with 16803. Westmoreland follows close behind with 16,718 and following that, Northumberland with a population of 12,259. Lancaster and Westmoreland round out the area, with 11,567 and 8809 respectively (U.S. Census, 2000).

Given the rural nature of the area and its reputation as being somewhat isolated, it is not surprising that the population densities are quite low. So we find King George with a 93.80 people per square mile, Lancaster with 87 people per square mile, Westmoreland at 73 people per square mile, Northumberland with 63.80 people per square mile and significantly lower, Richmond County with 46.10 people per square mile (Grymes, 2010, no page).
While substantially lower than the leading counties, Arlington for example hosts 7287 people per square mile, Fairfax 2455 people per square mile and Henrico 1102 people per square mile, it is interesting to note is that these numbers are not among the lowest in the state. The bottom three counties are peopled by 6.10, 9.5 and 15.4 people per square mile, respectively. Perhaps even more interesting, as we shall see, this same trend is true on the Eastern Shore.

In recent years, the Northern Neck has become a popular retirement destination. As a result, the area has a high proportion of retirement age people and overall, its population is older than the rest of the state (Virginia Outdoors Plan, 2007, 17). The residents of Lancaster and Northumberland Counties have the highest median ages in Virginia, with a median age in these two counties which exceeds “the median age of persons in the state by more than ten years” (17).

This in-migration of not only retirees, but wealthy individuals makes the Northern Neck an interesting contrast to the still quite isolated Eastern Shore. Forbes recently featured a story on Where America’s Money is Moving. Two Northern Neck counties, Lancaster and Northumberland, are found in the top 20 (Bruner, 2010, no page). Northumberland places 12th on the list, with an average arriving income of $35,992 and an average departing income of $26,869. Lancaster, at number 19, has an average arriving income of $40,243 and average departing income of $33,353 (Bruner, no page). Although this in-migration is a recent trend, the Northern Neck has long been a tourist destination.

Weekend visitors from Washington D.C. have long flocked to the Northern Neck (Burnham & Burnham, 2003, no page). Despite these visitors, the Northern Neck was
once isolated. From personal communications with residents of the Northern Neck, much of this influx has been facilitated by improved transportation infrastructure, most notably the bridging of the Northern Neck Rivers. And following that the removal of the tolls on those bridges. This new accessibility almost certainly impacted the culture of the Northern Neck. Whether for better or worse is a matter of personal opinion (L. Mebane, personal communication, May 6, 2010).

Of course both the bridging and the in-migration were probably inevitable, but it is interesting to consider the impacts that this has had on the way of the life of the Northern Neck, particularly as it pertains to this study and the historic ties that people had to the land. It is also interesting to compare this with the Eastern Shore. In that discussion, I will explore a number of studies which addressed the possible impacts of reduced commuter fees across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. More on that topic later. For now, let us look at the bridging of the Northern Neck rivers and how this has affected the community.

Dunton (2008) suggests that for generations prior to the construction of the Robert O. Norris Jr. Bridge such a bridge was a dream of many on the Northern Neck (3). As Dunton points out, “being nearly surrounded by water has had the effect in recent times of isolating the Northern Neck (3). And while the effects of this isolation were surely inconveniences, there were more pressing issues. Consider, for example, there was no hospital on the Northern Neck. Thus, medical care more serious than general doctor’s visits required use of the ferries, erratic and slow as they were (5).

That was all to change, when on August 30, 1957 the bridge connecting Lancaster and Middlesex Counties was opened to the public. In the years leading up to
the opening of the bridge ferry service between Middlesex and Lancaster Counties was run by the state of Virginia. Two ferries, the *York* and the *Virginia*, carried on average 827 cars across the river on a 25-minute crossing (Dunton, 4). By 1938, the Potomac had been bridged and there was a wide support for bridging the Rappahannock. When the bridge was completed in 1957, travelers were subject to a $0.75 toll. In current dollars that is would be $8.00 (6).

Seventy-five cents was at the time considered a substantial fee and so while the bridge made the area more accessible, the toll had a restrictive effect. This is in line with comments made by individuals with whom I have spoken. Other than those who worked off of the Northern Neck, people were discouraged from crossing the bridges owing to the tolls. But then in 1976 the tolls were suspended and by 1980 daily traffic rose to 5,000 cars per day. This was an increase from the 1,660 cars per day in 1970. By 2008, vehicular traffic had reached 11,300 cars daily (Dunton, 2008, 6 – 7).

The importance, or perhaps more neutrally the impact, of the bridges can still be felt today. Between 1994 and 1995 repairs were undertaken on the bridge. And although the bridge remained open to traffic 24 hours a day, there were substantial delays. Merchants in Kilmarnock noted that travels delays and difficulties had reduced businesses, these difficulties continued for sometime after the repairs were completed (Dunton, 2008, 7).

Overall, the bridging of the Northern Neck is lauded for the commercial effects not only on the Northern Neck but on the neighboring Middle Peninsula, especially Middlesex County. The towns of Kilmarnock, Whitestone and Irvington receive the lion’s share of the economic benefits of increased traffic (Dunton, 7). The low tax rates are
almost certainly a factor. But from discussions with residents, it is clear that these changes are not always welcome.

It is likely true that the changing nature of the Northern Neck is not solely the result of the bridges. Certainly its close proximity to Northern Virginia and Washington DC make it an appealing retirement or vacation spot. This has been so, according to Burnham and Burnham (2003), for generations. Colonial Beach, for example, has “never been shy about exploiting…natural endowments” catering to the Washington, DC tourists (Burnham & Burnham, no page). The Burnhams further note that “the story of this town is tied equally to Maryland as to Virginia” (no page).

Maryland, by virtue of a 1632 order, was given ownership of the Potomac river. Unsurprisingly, conflicts over the use of the river arose between Marylanders and those on the Northern Neck (Burnham & Burnham, no page). Colonial Beach, however, remained uninvolved in these disputes. The town instead chose to focus on the “good-time business of entertaining Washington D.C. tourists who came by the boatloads on summer weekends” (Burnham & Burnham). Given the location on the Maryland border, enterprising business people built beer piers into the Potomac. Thus, they were able to avoid the strict drinking rules in Virginia.

This ingenuity continues. In the 1950s, with gambling legal in neighboring Maryland, business owners developed a long pier into the Potomac and across the Maryland border. The pier, hosting casinos and slot machines revived Colonial Beach as a tourist destination (Burnham & Burnham). Sadly, this arrangement was not to last. In 1958, slot machines were outlawed by Maryland (DiLisio, 2005, no page). Similarly, the town’s neutrality in the border disputes was not to last.
Disputes had long characterized the relations between Maryland and Virginia. The use of the river being a point of contention and oyster wars simmered for centuries. At the conclusion of the Second World War there was a “violent resumption of the Oyster Wars” (Burnham & Burnham). Watermen, hired by Colonial Beach oyster packers, poached the oyster beds. The watermen were pursued by Maryland police. This culminated in the killing of a Virginia waterman. Reaction to this killing led to the “bi-state commission that to this day governs use of the Potomac (Burnham & Burnham, no page).

The origins of these tensions, at least those pertaining to the use of the river, might be traced to *The Charter of Maryland*. Signed in 1632, by King Charles I, the charter placed the states’ border not at the centre of the river, but at “the low water mark of the Potomac River on the Virginia side” (DeLisio, 2005, no page). This effectively gave Maryland ownership of the Potomac River, although it did allow limited use of the river by Virginia. Suffice to say, this generated some conflict. George Washington himself established a fishery in the Potomac, for which he neither sought Maryland permission, nor paid the state for the use (DeLisio, no page). In 1785, Washington convened commissioners from both sides and resolution seemed hopeful.

By the *Compact of 1785*, it was “agreed that the waters of the Bay and Pocomoke River would be considered a common highway, free for use by both states” (DeLisio, no page). This was in both states’ favor, because while Maryland had the law on her side, Virginia had geography on hers; controlling the mouth of the Bay. Arguments, adjustments and arbitrations continued, until, in 2003, the United States
Supreme Court weighed in on the issue. The case is of particular interest, I think, to the Northern Neck counties as they continue to develop.

Experiencing rapid growth, Fairfax County required additional fresh water. By an unhappy coincidence, the cleanest water in the Potomac is found in the middle of the river. Therefore, in order to extend an intake pipe into the middle of the river, Fairfax County needed permission from the State of Maryland. Permission was not forthcoming. After failed negotiations and refusals from two governors, Virginia took its case to the courts. In a 7 – 2 decision the Supreme Court “affirmed Maryland’s sovereignty over the entire riverbed, it also preserved Virginia’s rights to extend water intake pipes into the middle of the stream” (DeLisio, no page). The majority opinion stated:

*We conclude that the 1877 decision gives Virginia sovereign authority, free from regulation by Maryland, to build improvements appurtenant to her shore and to withdraw water from the river, subject to the constraints of federal law* (Delisio, no page)

If we leave the Potomac, its waters wars and suspect gambling, and venture to the shores of the Chesapeake Bay we will get a glimpse of the fortunes made from the Bay. Heading southeast from Colonial Beach one arrives in the town of Reedville and its Millionaire’s Row. On Main Street in Reedville one finds spectacular mansions, reminders of the “menhaden captains” and a time when “Reedville had the highest per capita income of any U.S. town (Burnham & Burnham, no page).

Although a quiet fishing village, Reedville remains a large centre for commercial fishing. The history of the town is tied “to a one-inch, bony fish--or more accurately, millions of small, bony fish” (Burnham & Burnham). The menhaden is an inedible fish,
but used in oil and fertilizer production. Hearing of the Bay’s menhaden, one Elijah Reed moved south and established a processing plant. The town was established with his name in 1874 (Burnham & Burnham). Reedville today maintain one of only two menhaden plants on the east coast (Watermen in the Southern Bay, 2009, no page).

A look at some census data will substantiate the pictures painted by these accounts of small rural towns. According to the census of 2000, only Westmoreland and Richmond counties have urban populations. Both host populations in urban clusters, rather than urban areas (CENSUS). And the percentages of urbanites are relatively low in both instances - 26% on Westmoreland and 16% in Richmond County.

It is also interesting to note, that despite the rural character of the Northern Neck, very few members of the population live in farm settings. Farm dwellers account for just 3% of the rural population in Westmoreland and 4% of the rural contingent in Richmond County. In the counties with entirely rural populations, the numbers are 1% (King George), 3% (Lancaster) and highest in Northumberland with 5%.

While agriculture is an important industry on the Northern Neck, these numbers are perhaps less surprising when one considers that forestry, fishing and crabbing are also major industries (RRVNR, no page). Also, as I shall discuss in the Eastern Shore chapter, there is a trend towards fewer, but larger farms.

It is not surprising to find that the urban-rural ratio for the state of Virginia, is much different that on the Northern Neck. For the state as a whole, only 27% of the population lives in rural areas (Census, 2000). The Northern Neck, does however, mirror the state on farm dwellers. Of the state-wide rural contingent, just 3% reside on farms.
How do the Northern Neck counties compare on education and income? Once again, the census can help us answer these questions. The five counties have the following education statistics: for the population 25 and older, 2% reach 12th grade but do not graduate while those with a high school diploma or equivalency number 22% (Census, 2000). State-wide the numbers are 2% and 17%, respectively. Those with a Bachelors degree account for 12% of the population of Virginia. On the Northern Neck just 8% of the population has a Bachelors degree.

As of the last census, the median household income for the state of Virginia was $46677. Interestingly, King George County has a higher median income than the state, with $49882. The remaining counties fall below the state average. Richmond County has the lowest average of the 5 counties, with $33026. Only slightly higher is Lancaster with $33239. Westmoreland and Northumberland round out the area, with $35797 and $38129 respectively.

Environment:

Citing the area’s abundant water and natural resources, the Virginia Outdoor Plan (VOP) cites the region as one of the “most important for environmental and conservation planning in the Chesapeake Bay watershed” (555). According to the Fish and Wildlife Service, the topography of Northern Neck supports “unique or increasingly rare vegetation and significant natural communities” (Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning [RRVCCP, 2009, 3-2]).

It is interesting to note that some of the area’s famous residents were concerned with protecting the environment. Stuhr (1973) argues that Thomas Jefferson “gave
serious consideration to soil conservation” and that both Jefferson and Washington “cautioned their compatriots against the destructive land practices” which had destroyed many Virginia plantations (68). Stuhr further argues that Jefferson’s concerns were not merely economic or utilitarian and that he, Jefferson, was concerned with the effect on the human spirit (68).

Dotted with farms, forested land and surrounded by unspoiled wetlands, creeks and marshes, the Northern Neck is enjoyed by fishermen and kayakers. And it is increasingly an attractive retirement spot. Despite this influx of people, the area remains one of the least developed in the Tidewater and is still a place where people can escape both urban and suburban life (VOP, 2007, 555).

There are a number of environmental groups active on the Northern Neck. These groups include local groups such the Northumberland Association for Progressive Stewardship. National and regional organizations are also represented, including the Nature Conservancy. Not surprisingly, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation also operates in the area (VOP, 2007, 560). The Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP, 2007) categorizes these groups as either land trusts or watershed groups. I will not use these designations and will simply address them as environmental groups.

A number of the larger groups (the Chesapeake Bay program and Nature Conservancy, for example) are also present on the Eastern Shore. And while the Eastern Shore hosts some groups not present on the Northern Neck, the environmental presence is certainly stronger on the Northern Neck. Of course, the Northern Neck is more populous and this may be reflected in its larger number of environmental groups.
The beaches and water resources are the most popular outdoor activities (VOP, 555), despite the popularity of these activities there is a lack of public access to the water. Trails for hiking, walking and biking are similarly lacking. If one considers the spending on parks and recreation, this lack of access is, perhaps, not surprising. Per capita spending in the area was: Richmond $40.59, Westmoreland $10.33, Lancaster $6.52 and Northumberland $3.88. Statewide per capita spending was $55.31 on parks and recreation. The average for counties in the state was $43.75 (VOP, 2007, 556).

The VOP concluded that “one of the largest voids in parks and recreation departments in Virginia is in the Northern Neck region” (556). Much of the recreation functions in the area have been turned over to private entities. And while these organizations can adequately provide recreation services, they cannot provide planning for the recreation needs of the community (VOP, 556).

The Northern Neck is also home to a National Wildlife Refuge. Established in 1996, the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is the newest of “four refuges that comprise the Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex” (Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge [RRVNWR], 2010, no page).

Two years after its inception, the refuge comprised 8191 acres (RRVNWR, no page). The goal is that the refuge will eventually “protect 20,000 acres of wetlands and associated uplands along the River and its major tributaries” (no page).

When considering the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore, it is important to note the problems facing the Chesapeake Bay. As the Northern Neck Planning District notes, the Bay and the adjoining “small bays, creeks and inlets” are a “major resource to the
area” (15). They are a source of employment for both fishermen and workers at seafood processing plants. The Planning Commission goes on to cite the deteriorating condition of the Bay, which has “jeopardized the harvest of oysters, crabs, clams and other seafood” (15). If the economy of the Northern Neck is to survive, argues the Commission, there must be a reduction in the pollution levels in the Bay.

How to go about addressing these problems is not a simple matter. As I already elucidated, tensions exist between the watermen and the various parties involved in conservation issues. In attempts to address the problems facing the Bay “what once was a relatively open fishery is now tightly regulated by Virginia, Maryland and in some cases the federal government” (Watermen of the Chesapeake, 2009, no page). An unfortunate consequence of these regulations, the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network seems to suggest, has been to drive watermen from the Bay (Watermen of the Chesapeake, no page).

It is worth noting that the Rappahannock has the “lowest population density” of tributaries in the Bay watershed and few point sources for pollution (RRVCCP, 3-11). But offsetting these apparently positives factors, is the fact that, it also has the “second-highest total area and percentage of agricultural land” (3-11).

**Market Research:**

As a former Marketing student, I became very familiar with market research. I decided to include it in this study, because I think that it offers a worthwhile supplement to census and other data. While often including census information, market research a richer picture of communities. Marketers explore traits that the census might not
address. For example, according to Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc (ESRI) *Rural Resort Dwellers* have the highest percentage of seasonal hunters, 16 times higher than the national average (*Tapestry Segmentation*, 2009, 52). Looking at the *Rural Bypass* population we find that they are the “top tapestry segment to own and/or buy new motorcycles” (*Tapestry Segmentation*, 77). It should also be noted that these so-called tapestries do not offer a complete picture. I merely offer them to enrich our understanding of these two locales.

In its market segmentation ESRI indicates seven market segments present on the Northern Neck. They name these groups *Rural Resort Dwellers, Rooted Rural, Silver and Gold, Rural Bypasses Military Proximity, Midland Crowd* and *Midlife Junctions*. I offer here only the points relevant to this research. More thorough explanations of these tapestries can be found in the appendices. As I will demonstrate the tapestries on the Northern Neck are very similar to those found on the Eastern Shore, but with some notable differences.

The Northern Neck is, not surprisingly, largely categorized as rural. It is interesting to note, however that there is a large presence of what ESRI terms the *Silver and Gold*. Unlike the Eastern Shore which is almost entirely rural, the Northern Neck does have some diversity. Let’s look at the demographics of the five counties.

I begin with Westmoreland County since it is the least diverse, comprising only rural tapestries. Specifically, *Rural bypasses* and *Rural Resort Dwellers*. Given its location on the Chesapeake Bay it is not surprising to find a substantial number of *Rural Resort Dwellers* on the Northern Neck. These areas are typically rural and non-agricultural. The neighborhoods tend to have low diversity, with the majority of the
population being white (*ESRI Data*, 2009, no page).

Of particular interest to this study are their civic activities. This group tends to be active in local issues. Specifically they are characterized by involvement in both church and environmental groups (*Tapestry Segmentation*, 52).

The second group in Westmoreland County are the *Rural Bypass*. The *Rural Bypassers* have more diversity than is found in *Rural Resort Dweller* communities. So we see a population that is 57% white and 37% black. It does share the rural landscape, but tends to be farming land. Towns tend to be small and located along country roads and neighborhoods are sparsely populated. Given the agricultural history of the area it is not surprising to find that there is a “higher than average” proportion of the population involved in agricultural sectors (*Tapestry Segmentation*, 77).

The remaining counties of the Northern Neck remain largely rural, but definitely show increasing diversity. Knowing that there is a growing migration to the Northern Neck and additionally a growing retiree population, this increased diversity is not unexpected. I will begin with Northumberland since it seems to be resisting the influx, albeit a little less successfully than Westmoreland. And then I will discuss the remaining three counties, which seem most affected by the recent influx and are most demonstrative of a changing Northern Neck.

The Northumberland community is comprised of three segments. The *Rural Resort Dwellers* we have already met. In addition we find *Rooted Rurals* and *Silver and Golds*, we will see this group prominently in several of the counties. I’ll begin by keeping with the rural theme and discuss a few points about that *Rooted Rurals*.

As we saw with the resort dwellers, there is little in the way of diversity in this
particular demographic. They are approximately 90% white. While agriculture is more prominent than in other U.S. communities, *Rooted Rurals* also have significant numbers of individuals in manufacturing and service industries (*Tapestry Segmentation*, 67).

The third group we see in Northumberland County are the *Silver and Gold*. This is an interesting group for the fact that it highlights the changes, I think, that are appearing between the Eastern Shore and the Northern Neck. Of the numerous segments that ESRI designates, this is the second oldest, with a median age of 59.6 years (*Tapestry Segmentation*, 36). Many have retired from professional occupations. While the segment is small, constituting less than 1% of households, it is a growing segment, with annual growth of 3%. As with several of the segments we have seen, the *Silver and Golds* are not ethnically diverse. This group is 93% white. As retirees, and wealthy ones at that, this group has the time and resources to pursue various interests. They are active in their communities, participating in local civic clubs and local issues. They also write letters to newspaper or magazine editors.

The *Silver and Gold* community is wealthy and educated. The communities on the Northern Neck are interesting, given that most *Silver and Golds* are to be found in warmer climes. Florida, California and Arizona are the destinations of choice. 60% of the nation’s *Silver and Gold* communities are located in Florida and an additional 25% are found in California and Arizona (*Tapestry Segmentation*, 36).

Lancaster County shares much the same demographic profile as Northumberland. Thus we see a *Rural Resort Dweller* community and a *Rooted Rural* community. But the county is dominated by the *Silver and Golds*. According to the segments offered by ESRI, 60% are categorized as *Silver and Golds* (*ESRI Data*, 2009,
In Richmond and King George Counties we are introduced to several new demographic groups (*ESRI Data*, 2009, no page). In Richmond County we have the *Rooted Rurals*. We have met this group before. But we also see a group termed the *Midlife Junctions*. As a group they are predominantly white, with a mix of families and singles. Unlike many of the segments we have met, this group is not considered rural. This is a suburban group (54).

Finally, let us look at King George County where we meet two new segments. The county is populated largely by *Military Proximity* and the *Midland Crowd*. The County website notes that it was “ranked as one of the top 25 military communities with military populations under 10,000” (King George County, 2010). So it should not be surprising that it has a designation of *Military Proximity*.

The members of the *Military Proximity* group are the second youngest of ESRI’s tapestries, with a median age of 22.5 years. As the name implies, they have a strong affiliation with the armed forces and more than 75% are employed in the military, either on active duty or as civilian employees. The community is characterized by high mobility, more than 90% have moved within the last five years (*Tapestry Segmentation*, 61). An interesting note on these households; their Internet usage is higher than the general population. No mention of their civic involvement, but they are described as highly family oriented.

King George’s second community, the *Midland Crowd* is ESRI’s largest segment. *Midlanders* include a mix of family and singles and they tend towards white collar employment. As with several of the Eastern Shore and Northern Neck communities, this
is a rural segment. They are a politically active group with conservative leanings. They work for candidates and serve on local committees (Tapestry Segmentation, 47).

Now that we have met the locals of the Northern Neck and understand a little of their history and way of life, let us move across the Bay and meet the residents of the Eastern Shore.
THE EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA:

The Eastern Shore includes only two counties; Accomack and Northampton. According to the 2000 census the combined population of the Eastern Shore’s two counties was 51,398. Accomack County contributed 38,305 and Northampton the remaining 13,093 (US Census, 2000). This amounts to less than one percent of the state’s total population (Virginia Outdoors Plan [VOP], 2007, 605).

Known as the "the Land Between Two Waters" (Eastern Shore of Virginia, 2006), it stretches from Chincoteague in the north to Cape Charles on the southern tip of the peninsula (Eastern Shore of Virginia, 2006). From the Maryland border to its southern tip, it is 70 miles long. At its widest the Shore is just 22 miles (Eastern Shore of Virginia).

The Eastern Shore boasts Virginia’s only island resort, Chincoteague Island (Chesapeake Bay Bridge, 2001, 1). The Shore is also home to “some of America’s most beloved sites”, most notably, Chincoteague Island and the Chesapeake Bay (Vision Plan, 2002, 9). It is characterized by “quaint villages” and “rich farmland” (VOP, 605).

It was noted earlier that both the Eastern Shore and Northern Neck share a legacy of agriculture and fishing. At present, about 12% of jobs on the Eastern Shore are resource related, including the agricultural, forestry, fisheries and ecotourism sectors (VOP, 605). And “despite having been settled continuously by Europeans longer than nearly any other area in North America”, the area remains largely rural (Grymes, 2010, no page). Of particular interest to historians is the fact that in conjunction with this lengthy settlement, the Eastern Shore has a “particularly fine series of county records” (Perry, 1990, 8). These records, “which date back to the year 1632” are “the oldest
continuous county court records in the United States (Ames, 1973, i). Let us look at what these records tell us about early life on the Shore.

The first European settlers arrived at Cape Charles in 1608. An exploring party led by John Smith arrived at the southern tip of the Shore where they were met by the natives (Perry, 1990, 12). The exploring party was quick to realize the natural resources of the Shore, particularly fish and salt. And so, by 1616 the Eastern Shore was “one of six places ‘possessed and inhabited’ in Virginia (Perry, 15). It was a short-lived endeavor and by 1619 salt production had ceased on the Eastern Shore (15).

The demise of salt production was probably, argues Perry (1990), due to a confluence of events. One of these factors was likely the effort to plant tobacco, the only profitable Virginia product (17). Later efforts by the Virginia Company to restore the salt were labeled a fiasco (19), but not all efforts on the Eastern Shore were failures. Owing to a number of reforms, the Company was able to establish a “nucleus of settlement” (20) on the Eastern Shore. And the nature of these settlements was largely agrarian.

Despite these failings and while legislators attempted to form towns, the immigrants were interested in and familiar with the land and hence became farmers, argues Ames (1973, 16). Ames continues, “Economic well-being, religious maintenance, and social privilege were rooted in the soil” (16).

An interesting facet of the early settlement on the Shore, and in contrast with the Western Shore, was the relations with the natives. While Indians on the Virginia mainland were hostile to the white settlers, those on the Eastern Shore established trade with the English (Perry, 1990, 21). Despite the animosity that existed between the
two Indian groups, the mainland Indians sought, in 1621, the help of the Eastern Shore Indians in a plot to poison the English. Not only did the Shore Indians refuse, they reported to the English a planned revolt by their western peers (21).

I am not suggesting, however, that tensions did not exist between the two communities. And the Indians certainly had the effect of shaping settlement patterns among the English (Perry, 38). Continued white settlement in the 1640s and 1650s, saw a concurrent deterioration in the relationship between settlers and Indians (39).

The Virginia Company continued to have a role on the Shore, but concludes Perry “the bulk of immigrants had come to Virginia under private rather than public auspices” (23). Perry notes that while little documentation remains to tell us of the life of these early settlers, it is likely that their living conditions, government and religion were compact and simple (27). Further, there was a trend on the Eastern Shore toward private land ownership and local government and religious institutions (27). It can be argued that hints of this legacy remain on the Eastern Shore.

The Church of England, at least until the revolutionary era, dominated religion on the Eastern Shore. Although, at times challenged by both Quakers and Presbyterians, Anglicanism was saved, argues Ames (1973) by tolerance. Dissenters were treated with respect, rather than hostility (208). Later, in the 18th century these sects would become a “potent influence in the affairs of the Eastern Shore (208). But it was during the revolutionary era, that the dominance of the Anglican Church began to be usurped. It was during this period that the Methodists and Baptists gained a foothold on the Shore (231).

The first church on the Eastern Shore was likely built in the 1620s (Ames, 1973,
And the present Hungars Church (which constituted part of the population for this study) was erected in 1751 (228). When “poverty and demoralization” stalled plans by the Virginia Company to build churches, the Assembly “ordered a house of rooms to be ‘sequestered’ in every plantation” as a place of worship (225 – 226). Churches were, according to Ames, “outward signs of their inward grace”. As such, parishioners paid much mind to their church buildings (225).

I offer one final anecdote on religion and the Eastern Shore. By way of Ireland and Barbados, one Francis Makemie found himself a Presbyterian preacher on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Ames describes him as “ever zealous in his profession” (239). It was a trait that brought him into conflict with the Virginia authorities. He was for a time the pastor of the Rehoboth congregation (238). I introduce this only because it is interesting to note that both the Rehoboth and Naomi Makemie (the wife of Francis) congregations survive to the present and are members of population of this study.

Let us leave these bygone days. What of Eastern Shore today and the people who populate it? The official site of the Eastern Shore notes that the fishermen of the Eastern Shore have harvested the waters of the Bay for generations (Eastern Shore of Virginia). Despite the struggling oyster populations, once the “pearls of the seafood industry”, the Watermen remain dependent on the Bay. Clam aquaculture is a multimillion-dollar industry and the harvesting of various shellfish and recreational fishing help maintain a viable economy on the Shore (Eastern Shore Essentials, 2009, 6). Fishing remains one of the largest industries on the Eastern Shore. As such, residents are conscious of the fragility of their natural environment and “strive to maintain an ecological balance” (6).
The people whose livelihood is derived from the Chesapeake have thus been shaped by their lives on the Bay. In turn, I would argue, these people have come to be representative of the Eastern Shore and the Chesapeake Bay. As the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (CBGN) offers,

Perhaps no image of the Chesapeake Bay is more enduring than that of a waterman heading into the sunrise, the sharp bow of his bright white workboat slicing the glimmering water, his radio blaring as he listens to his friends discuss the day’s work ahead. Living in small, tightly knit waterfront communities, these men (and a few women) help define the very essence of the Chesapeake. A Bay without watermen would be diminished, a place without a part of its soul

(*Watermen of the Chesapeake Bay, 2009, no page*).

Who are these watermen? The original English usage of the word waterman was a reference to smugglers. The term now refers to the men, and women, “who make a living by fishing, crabbing, and oystering on the Chesapeake Bay” (*Watermen of the Chesapeake Bay, no page*). In the Chesapeake Bay area the term watermen is preferred over fishermen “because oysters—and now crabs—have dominated the catch more than finfish” (Lesher, 2010, no page).

The watermen of the Chesapeake Bay often come to the life through family members. Skills are passed from father to son or brother to brother. It is common to find Watermen who are the “third, fourth, or even fifth generation to make his living on the water” (Lesher, no page). Until changes in the labor force, in the shape of easier, higher paying jobs and the introduction of migrant workers, lured them away, shore side jobs
were often performed by the wives of watermen (Lesher, no page). Over these
generations, the watermen have “have developed boat designs, gear and fishing
methods unique to the Chesapeake” (*Watermen of the Chesapeake Bay*, 2009, no
page).

Most watermen are independent fishermen, who own their boats and equipment.
Their days generally begin at sunrise and they work year round, whatever the weather.
Summers are dedicated to crabbing and winters to oystering. Spring, Fall and Winter
might be spent fishing various finfish species (*Watermen of the Chesapeake Bay*, no
page). The CBGN notes that for many watermen fishing is a second job. This might
require they “work a night shift and then come home and crab or oyster for a few hours,
sell their catch, and then go to sleep. This makes for a long day, but most do it because
they love being on the water” (*Watermen of the Chesapeake Bay*, no page).

The culture of the watermen faces a number of threats, from declining harvests,
pollution and low revenues. Yet, Lesher (2010) notes that “this work retains a strong pull
for many” (no page). The watermen can enjoy a striking work environment and “a
certain degree of pride that comes with the strong occupational identity shared by
watermen” (Lesher). The watermen live in communities on the water, many of which
have changed little over the years.

In its resources study of the Bay, the National Park Service stated that despite
widespread social and economic changes the Bay area maintains its “cultural richness”
(*Chesapeake Bay Special Resource Study*, 2004, 8). There is a sense of tradition which
endures, from “distinctive dialects, stories, and superstitions” to the “traditional trades of
the watermen, shipbuilders, lighthouse keepers, farmers, and old fishermen” (8). The
old traditions survive, at least in part, because there is an extensive local interest in “preserving historic structures and the cultural resources of the past” (8).

Given this deference to the past and tradition, it is perhaps not surprising that a large percentage of Eastern Shore residents report a single heritage. Of those who report their ancestry, 82% of Accomack County residents descend from single ancestry. That number is even higher in Northampton County, where 86% of the population who specify ancestry claims single ancestry. This is significantly higher than the state average of 76% single ancestry and the national average of 72% (Census 2000).

While the fishing communities of the Eastern Shore remain small independent operations, there is evidence that this is not so for the land-based agriculture. A 2003 JLARC study found that agricultural trends on the Eastern Shore mirror those across the United States, with fewer but larger farms. The average size of farms in both counties increased between 1992 and 1997 (The Future of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel [FCBBT], 2003, 25,). Farms in both counties are larger and more productive than the state average.

In spite of the fishing and tourism industries, the area’s income levels remain significantly lower than state averages. According to the US Census, the median household income for Virginia was $46677 (in 2000). For the Eastern Shore, that number was $30250 (Accomack Co) and $28276 (Northampton Co) (Census, 2000). Both Eastern Shore counties have a higher rate of people living below the poverty line. The state average for the year 2008 was 10.2%. For Accomack the number was 20.6% and Northampton’s poverty rate was slightly lower at 19.5% (State & County Quick Facts, 2010, no page).
Speaking to a long time Shore resident and former social worker puts these numbers into perspective. While it must be noted that her information is anecdotal, it is instructive nonetheless. She described families living in cinderblock houses, reminiscent of “slave shacks” and without running water. This poverty has in turn, she argues, lead to widespread drug abuse (K. Martin, personal communication, August 28, 2010). How widespread these problems are, is not clear, but clearly enough to have made an impression on this individual.

This contact also offered some insight into the history of the Shore and its residents. On a trip through the Shore, and venturing off route 13, one notices beautiful and rather large houses. This was difficult to reconcile with impressions of poverty that one gets of the Shore. She explained that many of those large houses belonged to the town doctors and many had been in the family for generations. She further pointed out that a handful of prominent Shore families had made their fortunes in land deals and that much of the wealth of the area remains within these few families.

Despite these lower income levels, it is interesting to note that the people of the Eastern Shore seem to embrace their way of life. Consider the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) Commuter Toll Impact Study, which explored the possible impacts of a reduced commuter toll fare. A reduced fare would have potentially opened the southern parts of the Eastern Shore to increased residential development (Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel Toll Impact Study, 2001, ES1).

The study considered the impacts on six areas of importance to residents of the Eastern Shore; transportation, tourism, economic development, agriculture/aquaculture, natural resources and quality-of-life/livable communities (ES1). It was concluded “a
CBBT commuter toll discount has the potential to make certain areas of southern Northampton County more attractive to residential development” (ES1). Under scenarios of a lower commuter toll, the anticipated number of households locating in the southern portion of the Eastern Shore through 2025 is estimated to be significantly higher” (ES1).

Such an influx would be expected to have substantial effects on the six aforementioned areas of interest. The findings suggest that that many residents of the Eastern Shore considered these anticipated effects to be negative (ES1). As Kozel (2005) notes, some on the Eastern Shore “opposed any toll decrease, saying that the largely rural character of the area would see increased development of homes for commuters and vacationers” (no page). That argument is particularly interesting, given the effects that the bridges and later removal of the tolls had on the Northern Neck.

Despite this opposition, the commuter toll study led to a reduced rate for travelers making a round trip journey within 24 hours. At that time, (December 2001) the toll was $14 for a roundtrip. $10 was paid on the first crossing and the subsequent $4 paid upon completion of the trip within 24 hours. The toll was later increased to $17, with a $12 initial payment and $5 pain upon return (Kozel, no page). The toll schedule for passenger cars, pick-up trucks, station wagons, motorcycles and minibus/van (with 15 or less seating capacity) is still $17 for a 24 hour return trip. (Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, 2010, no page). Below is a schedule of when the tolls were instituted.
Kozel, 2005, no page

I include this information, because as I noted with the Northern Neck, the bridging and lowering of tolls are but two factors which affect character of the area. But I think that they are important factors worth exploring. While the commuter rate is in effect, the toll for the CBBT remains high. Despite this high toll, Kozel (2005) argues that for the first 20 years, traffic volume was low, but in recent years it has increased. Average daily traffic is 9700 vehicles, but this number can approach 20000 during the summer (no page). Whether this increased traffic is a result of commuter tolls is questionable. The effects of reduced tolls on residential development also is questionable.

A look at the various studies undertaken on the tolls and also my personal communications, suggest a sentiment in the minds of residents that reduced tolls will lead to development and infringement on their rural way of life. It was suggested to me

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Toll Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>$4.00 per car plus 85 cents per passenger over the age of 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>$5.25, passenger tolls eliminated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>$9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1, 2002</td>
<td>$10.00, and $4 for a return trip within 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1, 2004</td>
<td>$12.00, and $5 for a return trip within 24 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that the southern tip of the Eastern Shore already suffers from many of the maladies affecting the Northern Neck; particularly in-migration which has lead to increased development. Thus, for an authentic Eastern Shore experience, one must venture further north (L. Mebane, personal communication, May 6, 2010).

I found these observations interesting, given that Accomack is the more populous of the two counties. My experience with the Eastern Shore was that the area immediately across the Maryland border suffers from much of what Virginians seem to want to avoid; large overdeveloped highways, with an overabundance of gas stations and convenience stores. It seems to me that these types of developments might begin to creep over the Maryland border. But from my communications and the findings presented in this study, it is development from the Hampton Roads area that concerns the residents of the Shore.

The Hampton Roads area is located in the southeast corner of Virginia on the border with North Carolina. Depending on the source one uses, it includes the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Newport News, Hampton, Chesapeake, Portsmouth and Suffolk (Hampton Roads, 2010, no page). Other organizations (for example the tourism site of the area) also include Gloucester and James City County (Visit Hampton Roads, 2010, no page).

What is important to this study is the fact that Hampton Roads neighbors the Shore to the south and the southeast. The two areas are separated by the Chesapeake Bay and are connected only by the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. But as I will discuss, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel has made settlement and development
from the Hampton Roads a more likely proposition. At least that is the fear of Shore residents.

As I noted in the discussion on the bridges on the Northern Neck, the bridges and reduced tolls likely only expedited the inevitable. In the case of the Eastern Shore, it is probably only a matter of time before population growth from the Hampton Roads area spreads into Northampton County. The JLARC study cited a number of earlier studies and while the results are mixed, there is evidence that some growth on the Eastern Shore is inevitable.

A VDOT study concluded that a reduced toll might place the Eastern Shore “in the Hampton Roads region’s outer zone of rapid growth sooner”, but that development in the next 20 years would occur regardless of the tolls. This is likely due to the study’s other conclusion that “commuters are not highly sensitive to changes in tolls, and that a commuter toll on the Bridge-Tunnel would not be likely to cause substantial changes in commuting patterns” (The Future of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel [FCBBT], 2003, 16).

A second study cited in the JLARC report found that while there were expected gains in tourism from a reduced toll, this increase was modest compared to scenarios where there was not a reduced toll (FCBBT, 17 – 18). Additionally, the study anticipated development on the southern end of the Eastern Shore under all scenarios that is; with

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7 It should be noted that the VDOT did receive some criticisms regarding its methodology. And an independent reviewer concluded that the study overstated the possible development on the Eastern Shore.
a commuter toll or without. Not surprisingly, the rate of development is higher under scenarios of a reduced toll.

For those who long to maintain the unique culture of the Eastern Shore, the study did find some heartening possibilities. There are certain environmental constraints particular to Northampton County, which might limit development in the area. These relate especially to groundwater issues (16). The JLARC study noted that the CBBT authority is not tasked with “growth management or economic development” (FCBBT, 23). The duty of ensuring appropriate growth on the Eastern Shore falls to local government.

In this regard, there is at least some feeling that local governments have not done enough to ensure “proper growth management” (FCBBT, 1). As one respondent argued, “the toll doesn’t make a difference – the county government needs to be controlling development” (31).

Although much attention has been paid to the CCBT, tolls and the potential effects on the Eastern Shore, transportation issues have had an impact on the area. The *Future of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel* study notes that increased traffic on Route 13 (of which the CBBT is a part) has had a detrimental effect on the local towns and locally owned businesses (26).

Non-agricultural activities were historically located in the Shore’s small towns and villages. There is now an “expanding commercial strip along Route 13”, which has “resulted in the relative decline of the towns, loss of locally-owned businesses” (26). What was once a self-sustaining economy is “now more focused and dependent on the retail corridor spreading along Route 13”, according to local government staff (26).
Some of this economic decline has been mitigated by so-called “hobby businesses” (26). Often created by new, retired residents, these businesses cater to tourists and are located in the towns. These small, part time enterprises are “providing economic activity that the counties would not enjoy otherwise” (26).

These various and sometimes contradictory sentiments are summed up Grymes (2010) who argues that the “land rush around Cape Charles has started; urbanization is close behind” (no page). He notes the reduction in commuter tolls and points out that the CBBT capacity is being incrementally increased. And while land is cheap and developers have begun building golf courses and housing developments, this may all be offset by a lack of potable water (no page). Whether the Eastern Shore, and Northampton County in particular, will follow the course of Lancaster and King George counties remains to be seen.

Environment:

The Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP, 2007) recognizes the Eastern Shore being “rich in natural resources and recreational opportunities” (605). The Eastern Shore includes most of the state’s Atlantic shoreline and saltwater marshes. Furthermore, the area provides the feeding grounds and incubating areas for birds and sea life and provides “vital resources that sustain many species of migratory fish and wildlife on their journeys” (605).

The Chesapeake Bay is vital for migrating birds and this turns out to be particularly true of the Eastern Shore. According to Schwedler (2009), “Virginia’s barrier island-lagoon system is arguably the best remaining example of coastal wilderness on
the Atlantic Coast " (no page). The Shore is home to a National Wildlife Refuge, the aptly named Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge (ESNWR). Citing the area’s “maritime forest, myrtle and bayberry thickets, grassland, fresh and brackish ponds, tidal salt marsh, and beach”, the US Fish and Wildlife Service considers the ESNWR “one of the most important migratory bird concentration points along the East Coast” (Eastern Shore of Virginia and Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan [ESVCCP], 2004, 1-2). During the fall migrations millions of birds rest on the Eastern Shore (ESVCCP, 1-2).

The area that is now the ESNWR, located on the southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, was once home to an army and later an air force base. As is true of most of the Shore, the original, mixed hardwood vegetation has long since been removed. However, when the Refuge was established, the military structures were removed and the land was “revegetated via natural succession” (USF&W, 3-6). This was intended to establish habitats that would support migratory birds (3-5). While loblolly pine and shrub now cover the land, a number of invasive species were established on the former bases and farmland (3-6).

The Shore, in fact boasts another National Wildlife Refuge. “One of the country’s most-loved refuges”, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge offers over “14000 acres of beach, maritime forest, and freshwater and saltwater wetlands” (VOP, 213). The refuge is home to more than 320 bird species, including bald eagles and the threatened piping plover (Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge [CNWR], 2010, page). Arguably the most famous residents of the refuge are the wild ponies.
Another of the natural resources of the Shore is its numerous barrier islands. The Atlantic coast of the Eastern Shore is sheltered by a chain of barrier islands. It has vast and diverse natural resources from “unspoiled coastline” to “marshlands, shallow bays and winding Channels” (VOP, 2007, 605). These resources have served to establish the Eastern Shore as an important destination for eco-tourism (605). The VOP recognizes that as in-migration continues it will have to balance protection of these natural resources, with the need for development. It is interesting to note that the barrier islands of the Eastern Shore are “almost totally in conservation ownership” (605). These barrier islands are classified as a “‘Wetland of International Importance” under the RAMSAR Convention⁸ (ESVCCP, 3-8). Only 17 sites in the United States have received the designation.

The geography of the region, including the narrowness of the Shore, its many tributaries and its low elevation, make it particularly susceptible to the effects of climate change. Rises in sea-level could affect the natural resources of the area and additionally residential and commercial property. It should be anticipated that any rise in sea level would have a negative effect on outdoor recreation pursuits and the eco-tourism industry (VOP, 605).

It was mentioned in an earlier section that the water situation on the Shore, at least in Northampton County, might be a mitigating factor in development. So what is the water situation? The US Fish and Wildfire Service notes that Northampton has a

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⁸ The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, (the Ramsar Convention), is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Ramsar Convention is the only global environmental treaty that deals with a particular ecosystem, and the Convention's member countries cover all geographic regions of the planet (http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-home/main/ramsar/1_4000_0__).
unique hydrology with “no major perennial free-flowing streams” (ESVCCP, 3-12). Thus any discussion of hydrology must be in terms of ground water and estuarine surface water (3-12).

Several environmental organizations currently operate on the Shore. The Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP, 2007) categorizes these groups as either land trusts or watershed groups. I will not use these designations and will simply address them as environmental groups. Not surprisingly the Chesapeake Bay Foundation has a presence on the Eastern Shore. It is joined by several other groups including the Nature Conservancy, the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust, Virginia Eastern Shorekeeper and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

As was the case with the Northern Neck, the Eastern Shore is in need of trails for walking, biking and hiking (VOP, 2007, 605). The VOP also suggests that given the growth in eco-tourism, the addition of nature study areas and environmental education facilities should be considered (605). It is interesting to note that while per capita parks and recreation spending on the Eastern Shore is lower than state averages, both counties have higher spending than their Northern Neck counterparts. Accomack has a per capita rate of $13.86 and Northampton, $15.72.

**Market Research:**

As with the Northern Neck, to augment the information provided by the census and gain a richer understanding of the two communities I turned to information uncovered by market research. Using this information we get the following picture of the two counties that make up the Eastern Shore. Not surprisingly, the area is almost
completely described as rural. The one exception being several zip codes in Accomack County, which are classified as suburban.

According to ERSI Northampton County comprises four groups; Rural Resort Dwellers, Rooted Rurals, Rural Bypasses and Heartland Communities (ERSI Data, 2009, no page). Each of the four sectors is characterized by low density, non-agricultural rural dwellings. With the exception of the rural bypasses each of these groups has low racial diversity, with approximately 90% of the population being white. All four display what I would term a self-sufficient streak, undertaking home improvement projects and working their own yards and gardens. Hearkening back, perhaps, to their agricultural roots.

Of particular interest to this study are the rural resort dwellers and the heartland communities. There is a trend among these people to participate in local civic issues, join religious and charitable organizations. In the case of the resort dwellers environmental groups are specifically named (Tapestry Segmentation, 52).

Northampton County’s more populous northern neighbor shares many of these same population segments. Thus we find Rooted Rurals and Rural Bypasses. Also present are Heartland Communities and Rural Resort Dwellers. Missing from Northampton, but present in Accomack are the Prairie Living and Midlife Junction sectors. Midlifers are unique to the Eastern Shore only because they are considered a suburban population, whereas the remaining segments on the Eastern Shore are rural. Similar to the other four segments both the midlifers and prairie living show little diversity, with approximately 90% of the prairie life segment being white (Tapestry Segmentation, 54 & 58). The prairie community (represented, incidentally, by Tangier
Island) are described as political conservatives and when they are active in their communities it is typically through involvement with the church (Tapestry Segmentation, 58).

**RESULTS:**

I set out to explore a number of questions and relationships. The most of important of these being: are the Christian churches on the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore engaged in environmental programs. Further, to what degree are they environmentally active and what the nature of these programs is? I was also curious to determine whether there were differences between denominations and locations. With these questions in mind, let me now introduction the results of my data analysis.

The first question I asked investigated was who had responded to the survey. The original mailing was initially sent to 264 churches. However, several were returned as either vacant or the addresses were incorrect. The number was further reduced as a number of respondents indicated that several of their congregations had a number of locations. Removing these churches left me with a population of 238. I received 70 responses. Using the larger population of 264, the response rate is 26.5%. If, however, I exclude those surveys that were returned the response rate increases to 29.4%.

The Northern Neck constitutes 71% of the population and the Eastern Shore 29%. I looked at response rates by both location and denomination. By location the response rate was 72% from the Northern Neck and 27% from the Eastern Shore. The
remaining one percent accounts for the one respondent who removed the numeric code on the survey and who I was, therefore, unable to classify.

Figure II – *Population by Location*

![Population by Location chart](image)

Figure III – *Respondents by Location*

![Respondents by Location chart](image)
I also looked at responses by denomination. The survey gave three options for denomination: Catholic, Protestant and Neither. I was surprised to only receive one response from the Catholic congregations. This amounted to just 1% of the response rate. Protestants constituted 89% of respondents and the remaining 10% were those who described themselves as *Neither*.

This result is a little less surprising, though, when one looks at the makeup of the entire population. Catholic churches on the Northern Neck and Eastern shore are just 3% of the total population. Protestants are 84% and *Neither* 13%. It must be acknowledged that these classifications for the population are mine and might not reflect how congregations would group themselves.

*Figure IV – Population by Denomination*
The next set of questions dealt with whether or not respondents have implemented environmental programs and what is the nature of these programs. Given the research question and the goals of this study, these are important questions. These questions dealt with both the type and frequency of programs. I was not surprised to find that the majority have no environmental programs. 3% did not answer the question, 38% have implemented some form of environmental program. The vast majority, 59%
have no program in place. This was the result that I anticipated, but I was surprised to find as many programs as I did.

\[\text{Figure VI – Have Started Environmental Program}\]

It was interesting to explore what types of programs were in place. I will offer, in the discussion, further insights into how and why I classified the various activities in the way I did and my thoughts on these results. Here I will simply explore which programs are most prevalent. As Figure VII, below, illustrates, Recycling and Other are the most frequently instituted programs. Elect, which included engaging elected officials and participating in collective action, is not practiced by any of the respondents.

\[\text{Figure VII – Environmental Program Types}\]
It has been argued throughout this paper that the church has an important role to play in the environmental movement. Do the respondents to this survey concur? The results would suggest they do. Asked whether the church has an important role to play, the responses were ambivalent. Looking first at the descriptive statistics, the mean score, on an eight point scale, was 3.61. This was an eight point scale, with one indicating the church has an important role to play and 8 representing no role. The mode, or most prevalent response, was a two. These results are presented in Table II – Role Church Should Play.

Table II – Role Church Should Play (descriptive)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N Valid</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>2.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>4.385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using the dependent variable, what role should the church play (ChurchShould) are there significant differences based on either location or denomination (the independent variables)? The results of a two-way ANOVA indicate that there are not. The significance scores for denomination and location are 0.107 and 0.679, respectively. At a 95% confidence level, neither result is statistically significant.

I also sampled the population to discern their awareness of, and participation in, a number of environmental programs. These are programs offered by external religious groups. I looked at; Stewards of the Bay (NCC), Chesapeake Covenant Congregations (NCC) and Eco-Stewardship (Virginia Interfaith Centre). I selected these programs because they are provided by local organizations or they deal specifically with Bay issues, which I thought would resonate with the two communities. The second criteria was that they were non-denominational or in the case of the Eco-Steward program, multi denominational.

It has been suggested that church’s participation in environmental programs increases when churches undertake these programs with partners (Hodgkinson, 1992). Given those findings, I was interested to see whether these programs would have strong support. So it was a little surprisingly to find that not only do these three programs have low recognition, they also have very little support among the respondents.

Table III – Stewards of the Bay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>StewardsBay</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Unfamiliar with Program</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

235
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chesapeake Covenant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfamiliar with Program</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know of Program</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Participated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</table>

Table IV – *Chesapeake Covenant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eco Stewardship</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfamiliar with Program</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>77.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know of Program</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.6</td>
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<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table V– *Eco Stewardship*
The three programs I mentioned above are not organized by environmental groups, but by religious organizations. Are the respondents averse to partnerships? As it turns out there is a sentiment, albeit weak, that it is appropriate for churches to partner with environmental groups. Asked whether it was appropriate to partner with environmental groups, the responses were slightly on the positive end of the scale. Looking at the descriptive statistics, the mean response was 4.4 on a ten point scale (where one indicated strong support for environmental partnerships). Interestingly, the most frequent response or mode was a one (Table VI). Furthermore, the results of an ANOVA show there were no significant differences between groups; denomination has a significance level of 0.058 and location 0.824.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have Participated</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2.9</th>
<th>2.9</th>
<th>100.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VI – Are Environmental Partnerships Appropriate (descriptive)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EnvPartApprop</th>
<th>N Valid</th>
<th>67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

237
Given these findings it is a little surprising to find that the three aforementioned programs have such low recognition and support. This is particularly so, because I would deduce that working with other faith-based groups would be more prevalent than in fact it is. In a similar line of questioning, respondents seemed to suggest that they would be more effective not working with environmental partners. Asked which they thought was more effective; adopting sustainable habits in their church or partnering with environmental groups, the results show a preference for adopting sustainable practices rather than forming partnerships.

The descriptive statistics provide a mean score of 5.93, leaning towards adopting habits rather than partnering with environmental groups with a mode of six (Table VII).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HabvPartn</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Valid 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A little closer inspection indicates that there are in fact differences based on the location of the congregation. Using a two-way ANOVA and first determining there was no interaction between independent variables I obtain the following results. As Table VIII below highlights, there is a statistically significant (0.03), at 95% confidence, difference between the locations. This relationship is demonstrated graphically in Figure VI, below.

Table VIII – Habits or Partnerships (ANOVA)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>26.733 *</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.911</td>
<td>1.905</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>272.933</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>272.933</td>
<td>58.362</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denom</td>
<td>3.333</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.666</td>
<td>.356</td>
<td>.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>23.161</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.161</td>
<td>4.953</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>285.267</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4.677</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2652.000</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>312.000</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .086 (Adjusted R Squared = .041)

Figure VII – Habits or Partnerships
There is an interesting twist to these results, though. Continuing this theme of partnerships, I also questioned whether the congregations were involved in partnerships to restore the Bay. Additionally, respondents were asked would they be willing to work with environmental groups and of those who had worked with a partner were asked who had initiated the partnerships.

As we see in Table IX, the large majority, 82.9% have not been involved in any Bay related partnerships. If, however, one looks at the 15.7% churches that have worked with environmental groups, we find the following: the church initiated the partnerships 82% of the time. Third parties and environmental groups each facilitated the partnerships in 9% of cases (Table IX and Figure IX).

Table IX – Initiated Partnerships
Looking at this issue a little more, I asked whether the residents whether they would be willing to work with environmental groups on Bay issues. Considering the results just mentioned, it was not surprising to find that 41% responded that they would be willing to do so. This means that 51.1% of the respondents have either worked with an environmental group or would consider doing so.

![Initiated Bay Partnerships](image)

Table X – Partnerships Attitudes
There is a small discrepancy in the numbers, which I should explain. 16% of respondents indicated that they had worked on Bay programs with an environmental group. But when looking at the types of programs that are in place just 7% listed programs related to the Bay. This is probably the result of two factors.

The first is that question related to programs implemented and not partnerships. The second issue is that I included in the Bay category only those responses that specifically mentioned the Bay. So it is conceivable that respondents who listed river clean ups or tree planting were in fact working on Bay related projects. However, unless they explicitly stated that it was to restore the Chesapeake, I did not include it in that category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BayPartner</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would Not</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure X – Partnerships Attitudes
I will return to these apparently contradictory findings and further discuss what they may suggest in the discussion section.

I explored the attitudes on a number of issues, including environmental justice and whether the environment is a moral issue for Christians. The results were quite surprising.

I will begin with the question of environmental justice. I think that these results were the most unexpected. It had been my assumption that if any environmental concerns were important, it would be those of environmental justice. But, the results were ambivalent. I will elaborate on this in the discussion section, but let me offer the findings.

Asked whether environmental justice was an issue individual Christians should address the mean response was 3.25. The mode for this question was one, indicating the response which received the most responses was; environmental justice is an issue Christians should address. Asked whether environmental justice is an issue the church
should address, the results yielded a slightly higher mean score of 3.48, but the mode was the same; one. On the question of whether the environment is a moral issue for Christians, the mean response is 7.12 and a mode of eight (these results are shown in Tables XI, XII and XIII below).

It should be noted that the first two questions were on an eight-point scale with one indicating strong agreement and eight no agreement. The latter question is on a ten-point scale. Nonetheless, there is significantly more support for the idea that environmental issues are a moral concern for Christians than for environmental justice concerns.

Table XI – Environmental Justice - Christian (descriptive)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICEnvJust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Valid</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>3.688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table XII – *Environmental Justice - Church (descriptive)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EnvJust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>0.242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>2.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>4.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XIII – *Environment Moral (descriptive)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EnvMoral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>7.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>0.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>8(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>2.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>5.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.
Are there differences in these attitudes based on location or denomination? Looking more closely at these issues we find that no significant differences exist based either on location or denomination for either, ICEnvJust, EnvJust or EnvMoral. For the question of environmental justice as an issue for individual Christians yields significance levels of 0.163 for denomination and 0.349 for location. Neither result is statistically significant. For environmental justice as a concern for the church, the scores are 0.186 (denomination) and 0.583 (location), both not statistically significant.

Finally, on the question of whether environmental issues are a moral concern for Christians, assuming a 95% confidence interval no statistically significant results are found based on either location or denomination. The results are 0.539 for denomination 0.193 for location. For each of these three tests I initially tested for interaction between the independent variables and none were found.

I hypothesized that a congregation’s Biblical literalism would influence their environmental attitudes. Let us look at the results of a number of responses and how the congregation’s literalism affected each. Does a church’s interpretation of the Bible affect its attitude towards involvement in the environmental movement? The results of a linear regression do not support the hypothesis that a literal interpretation affects attitudes towards church involvement in environmental policy.

Using the independent variable, Literal Interpretation and the dependent variable, what role should church play, produced the following results: the relationship is positive (B =0.149), but weak (R = 0.247). Further, the p score (0.041) is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.
A Chi-Square test was used to determine whether a literal interpretation affects the choice to implement an environmental program. From the cross-tabulations, we see that the majority of respondents who have in place some environmental program do not follow a literal interpretation of the Bible (disagree or strongly disagree). In this case, assuming a confidence interval or 95%, we find that the results are statistically significant at 0.016.

Table XIV– Interpretation-Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>20.413a</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>24.477</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 16 cells (80.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .81.

It was shown that neither denomination nor location affected whether the respondents viewed environmental issues as a moral concern to Christians. The results of a linear regression suggest that interpretation of the scriptures does not significantly affect views on the morality of environmental issues. The R score of 0.412 suggests a weak relationship between variables. The IV explains only 17% of the variance in the DV (R Square = .017). From the linear regression I can conclude that the relationship between biblical interpretation and views on the environment as a moral issue is negative (B = -0.102) and not statistically significant (p = 0.237).
DISCUSSION:

At the outset of this project, I suspected that I would find little in the way of environmental programs. While the results have largely supported that assertion, I think there are a number of positive results too. Before examining my study, I would offer some insights not directly related to my research, but definitely relevant to the issue of faith-based stewardship.

This past summer, I passed a church holding summer Bible school. Their theme was; *Go Green for God.* Through the course of this study, I have seen stories about religious environmentalist appearing with more frequency. I do not think that I could call this a mainstream topic, but I can certainly see changes over the time that it has taken me to complete this work. While it is true that most stories about faith-based stewardship appear in specialized publications, there is a shift in that trend too. Now one might find such a story in *Time* or *Newsweek* or *The New York Times* magazine.

I have come across, in my personal readings, unrelated to this research, reference to religion and the environment in publications such as the Sierra Club magazine and the BBC’s wildlife magazine. And the topic can be found in textbooks about competitive business strategies.

Of course, as I have stated, the issue remains largely overlooked in the scholarly research and among environmental groups. Hopefully as faith-based activities become more prevalent and popular news begins addressing it, scholarly research will follow. So, let me know offer my thoughts on my research.
It is true that the majority of respondents (59%) have no environmental programs in place. This is as I had expected. I should also offer that there were, in fact, more programs than I anticipated (38%). I also believe, that looking at the attitudes, there is reason to believe that environmentalism is slowly becoming an issue that churches are willing to address. There is also the potential for relationships between environmental professionals and the religious community.

I further hypothesized that there would be differences between location and denomination. While there were a few differences based on location and some differences depending on the respondent’s biblical interpretation, there was little to differentiate responses on either of these variables. The data, largely, suggests that there are few trends and very few of the results are statistically significant.

There are some indications that environmentalism is at least an issue that churches are pondering, but it is not yet a priority. Those responses that favored environmentalism, whether this was in favor of programs or partnerships, were ambivalent. Although ambivalent, it was tending towards the positive, that is in favor of environmentalism. There were, nonetheless, some interesting findings and I think that the study certainly raises a number of questions. Hopefully this will lead to further research on the topic. I will offer my thoughts on the data and what I found particularly interesting.

I was initially pleasantly surprised to find that 38% of respondents have in place some environmental program. In the survey, this was an open-ended question, with respondents asked to describe their programs. This produced a wide range of
responses. For the purposes of analysis, I reduced and grouped these into the following eight categories:

- Recycling
- Conserve
- Energy
- Education
- Bay
- Elect
- Other
- Missing

It should be noted that any environmental program should be applauded. If one looks at these programs as evidence of being good stewards then this is certainly an important discovery. However, it has been stated throughout this work that religion has the power to affect attitudes and behaviors. If the goal is not only for churches to be good stewards, but them to encourage the same attitudes and behaviors in their congregations, then the results are little less powerful. Or at least they are potentially so.

Consider recycling, for example. It is the most widely employed activity (along with the catch-all other). Again, not to belittle recycling efforts, but it could be argued that it is a “safe” environmental practice. It is widely practiced in the community at large and probably requires little support from the congregation. It is conceivable that those who are recycling have done so without the involvement of the congregation. This same point can be made about energy efficiency activities.
From this research, I cannot say what the nature of these programs is. If, however, we look at the most popular activities, it would appear that churches are engaged in those activities, which would not require congregational support. Those activities, which might be controversial in the congregation or community, such as writing elected officials, are not widely practiced. Those activities which, it may be argued, are uncontroversial such as tree planting and river clean ups (Conserve) or do not require the participation of the congregation; using energy efficient electronics (energy) are the most prevalent. But those that would require explicit support of environmental programs or issues are infrequently practiced.

So, we find that none of the respondents are involved in any activities that require engaging elected officials (Elect). This included writing letters to said officials or encouraging the congregation to do the same. It also included attending environmental/activist events such as demonstrations or sit-ins. Similarly, there is little activity in education (including allowing environmental professionals or groups to address the congregation or including environmental messages in sermons). And work on Chesapeake Bay projects was little supported.

This was not an unexpected finding. From the literature, I knew that churches that are similar or closely tied to the local community are less likely to be involved in political-type activities (Djupe & Gilbert, 2002, 604). From personal communications, I received similar feedback, even when churches are in large, diverse communities. It was suggested to me that the church would not start a program, even something as simple as a recycling program, if the priest believed that there was opposition in the congregation (M. Harper, personal communication, 2010).
If, in a large, urban congregation, the priest is unwilling to implement programs that would anger the congregation, it is not surprising that churches in small, homogenous communities are not involved in activist, provocative actions. In fact, given these sentiments it is quite promising, I think that 38% of respondents have programs at all.

I created a separate category for the Bay, because I was interested to see if there was much participation in projects specifically relating to the Bay. It was my contention that because of the proximity to and dependence on the Bay, that there would be support of Bay-related programs. Clearly there was not. Looking at this from a different perspective, though, I did find an interesting result.

In those congregations that have partnered with environmental groups to work on the Bay, the church initiated the vast majority of those partnerships. Of course, it must be recognized that the entire pool of respondents only numbers 70 churches. As already noted, just 16% of the respondents have partnered with an environmental group to work on Chesapeake Bay problems. While that amounts to just 11 of the 70 respondents, it was nonetheless interesting to observe that in 82% of cases, that is nine out of the 11, it was the church that initiated the partnership. Furthermore, 41% of the 70 respondents indicated that they would, in fact, be willing to work with environmental groups to address the Bay’s issues.

This was, in my opinion, one of the most interesting findings. I cannot say what the situation is with the remaining 84%. Were they approached by environmental groups and elected not to engage them? Have they attempted to work with environmental groups without success? Based on the research either is a viable situation. It was
offered earlier that Carl Pope, president of the Sierra Club, believes that environmentalists were “soured on religion” (Gardner, 2003, no page). This was an opportunity missed, concludes Pope (Gardner, no page). Might this explain why churches have initiated the majority of partnerships?

There alternative argument must, of course, also be offered. It is possible that environmental groups have reached out to churches and been rebuffed. Because while environmental groups have overlooked the role religions can play, it is also true that religions have been suspicious of the environmental movement. In particular, there is a fear among certain religious groups of pantheism or nature worship (Hoffman, 2000, 121 – 122). Of course, it is possible that this suspicion has prevented churches from accepting environmental assistance. I am personally disinclined to accept this view though. Again, the numbers are small and inferences are difficult, but nonetheless the strength of these small numbers suggests that churches are the ones reaching out to environmental groups.

My study does not address these questions, but I think that they are certainly worth asking. My results only indicate that very few partnerships have occurred and those that have been forged have largely been instituted by the church. I think that there are a number of interesting research directions stemming from these results.

These results were a little confounding when looking at the attitudes towards partnerships. The responses suggest partnering with environmental groups is appropriate. Yet, respondents also indicated that they felt it would be more effective to adopt sustainable habits, rather than working with environmental groups. Surprisingly,
this was affected by location, with the Northern Neck respondents more likely to favor habit versus partnerships.

Given the past tensions between Eastern Shore residents and environmental groups, it was interesting to find these aforementioned attitudes. I would have expected the Northern Neck respondents more likely to engage in partnerships. I cannot account for this. I know that others have addressed faith-based environmentalism on the Shore. Is it possible that the program of Emmerich still resonates with the local people and congregations? Or is it a more practical matter? Environmental groups have resources and expertise specific to environmental issues, which small churches would not have access to. I will add this to the list of questions that has been raised by this project.

I have discussed these issues of partnerships at length, because I think that they are important. In her study of religious beliefs and activities, Hodgkinson (1992) found that religious groups are more likely to be involved in environmental and conservation activities when they undertake these programs with partners (no page). If the goal is to involve the church in environmental activities, and I argue this should be the goal, then environmental groups or religious groups (such as the National Council of Churches) should be exploring ways to do this. This brings me to the various environmental programs about which I enquired.

Respondents were asked to rate their awareness of or participation in a number of environmental programs. The programs were selected because they related specifically to the Bay or operated locally. The other criteria were that the programs were faith based and either non-denominational or multi-denominational. Given this, I selected three programs I thought would have wide support.
The National Council of Churches, under their stewardship programs, runs the first two programs for the Bay. The *Stewards of the Bay* being a part of the larger *Chesapeake Covenant Congregations*. Both programs promote stewardship of God’s creation, in particular of the Chesapeake Bay. The third organization is Virginia Interfaith Power and Light. The group is a non-profit, which aims to “help faith communities recognize and fulfill their duties as stewards of creation, while also serving as their voice on state and federal legislative matters” (Virginia Interfaith, no page, 2009). I assumed that these types of programs might have more support than those implemented either by government or environmental NGOs. This proved not to be the case.

As I presented in the results; none of the programs have wide support. 2.9% of respondents have participated in both the Chesapeake Covenant and Interfaith programs and just 1.4% in the Stewards of the Bay program. What was more surprising was the low recognition that each of the programs has. Stewards of the Bay, 80% are not aware of the program. The Interfaith EcoSteward program was almost as dismal, with 75.7% of respondents indicating they were not familiar with the program. The National Council of Church’s Chesapeake Covenant fared only slightly better with 71.4% being unaware of the program.

These two organizations, the NCC and the Interfaith Centre, have clearly made the connection to faith and the environment. Further, they have made a commitment to be good stewards. Yet, these results suggest that their efforts are little known among, what I would assume, are their target audiences. I would envision that groups such as the NCC have an important role to play, because being religious themselves they can be the bridge between churches and environmental groups.
The NCC has been mentioned throughout this work for its progressive and active stance on a number of environmental issues. So, this question of why their programs have such low recognition is a curious finding. Does this suggest that the NCC and similar organizations provide a wealth of information, but they do so passively and hence churches must actively search out the resources? Or are the NCC and others actively engaging congregations, but the message is lost or unwelcome?

It would be interesting to explore whether there are differences between urban and rural churches. If organizations like the NCC’s worked with larger, urban churches their impact and reach would be much larger, whereas if they partnered with small local churches this impact would be much reduced. So, it is possible that this affects their efforts; of course, this is all conjecture. This study did not explore that relationship, but it would be interesting to look at in future research. I think this is a particularly important question. While environmental groups might be looked at as radicals or pagans, the NCC has the benefit of being a Christian group. It, and similar groups, can potentially serve as the bridge between environmental groups and the religious community.

While many of the results were not statistically significant, they were nonetheless intriguing. One of the most predictable results dealt with the subject of environmental justice. While I thought attitudes towards environmental issues would be ambivalent, I assumed environmental justice would be considered an important issue for the church and the individual Christian. Environmental justice is not an issue about trees or streams or endangered species, all of which it may be argued are less important than humans. The concerns raised in environmental justice deal with how we interact with
our fellow humans and in many instances with the poor or minorities. The church is concerned with these issues.

Furthermore, several dominations explicitly make the connection between environmental and human suffering. The Presbyterian Church in its Environmental Ministries, for example, point out that in our current environmental crisis “biological systems suffer diminished capacity to renew themselves”, “wastes and poisons exceed nature’s capacity to absorb them” and while the rich grow richer “peasants are forced onto marginal lands and soil erodes” (Environmental Ministries, 2010, no page). Similarly, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops states that the goal is “to educate and motivate Catholics to a deeper reverence and respect for God’s creation…in activities aimed at dealing with environmental problems, particularly as they affect the poor” (Justice, Peace, Human Development, 2010, no page).

Given these positions, it was not surprising to find that the respondents rated environmental justice as an important issue for both individual Christians and the church. The surprisingly aspect of this result, if anything, was that there was not stronger support. Further, there were no statistically significant differences between the respondent’s denomination and their location.

As I have already discussed, it was my intention in designing the survey, to avoid the terms fundamentalist or liberal to describe the congregations. But I also suspected this was a characteristic which would affect attitudes and practices. Thus, respondents were asked whether they are Protestant or Catholic or Neither. And to address this fundamentalist/liberal issue, I settled on a scale question asking whether the congregation accepted a literal interpretation of the Bible.
The results show that those who do not follow a literal interpretation of the Bible are more likely to have implemented an environmental program, 15 versus 12. From the other perspective; of those who do not have environmental programs in place, 25 follow a literal interpretation. Those who do not follow a literal interpretation and do not have any environmental programs number 15. Further analysis indicates that this finding is statistically significant. What that allows me to conclude is that those differences do not exist purely by chance.

Again, this is not an unexpected finding. I would, nonetheless, still conclude that it deserves further investigation. The question that bears asking in this particular case is what role the congregation plays in church attitudes. From the literature presented, it is evident that evangelicals have begun to explore eco-theology. The Evangelical Environmental Movement is active, unlike the NCC, is devoted entirely to environmental issues. So, to suggest that environmental issues are a concern only for more liberal churches would be inaccurate.

While most of the respondents are not involved in environmental stewardship, there are indications that they would be willing to work with environmental groups. Furthermore, there is a sentiment that environmental issues are a concern for both the church and for individual Christians. It is true that this stated support, for example for partnering with environmental groups, is not particularly strong. Respondents were also asked about their most important outreach projects. None indicated that environmental work was among their top outreach, which is not surprising.

Despite these somewhat ambivalent responses, I think that three main points should be noted; a large number of the participants in this study are at least open to
working with environmental groups. In addition, there is sentiment that it is appropriate for the church to partner with environmental groups. I think that what this suggests is that there is potential to involve the church in environmental programs. Also, as have I stated a number of times, the most striking result of this study has been how many new questions it has raised.

If respondents do believe that the environment is a moral issue and that the church has a role to play in the environmental movement, why are more churches not participating in stewardship activities? What I think would be particularly interesting is to explore the relationships between congregation attitudes and church activities. As I offered in the literature review, environmental issues are cited as being important in the population. But this can certainly be expected to vary across the country. It would be interesting to see a church’s attitudes and practices vary depending on the congregation’s. Of course, this would involve questioning both the congregation and the clergy or church officials.

*Environmental Policy Implications:*

I embarked on this project in the hope that I would make a contribution to the Public Policy literature and more specifically to Environmental Policy. From this research I am convinced that faith-based stewardship is a growing area of interest. While this interest has largely come from the religious community, I think that there is a growing interest in the environmental community. As I have stated throughout this work there is a lack empirical research from the Policy or environmental perspective which
addresses religion and the environmental. I am confident that the findings from my research will add to the growing knowledge of faith and the environment.

I am most pleased with two outcomes of this project. The first is that the research has raised a number of questions, which I hope will spur future research. The second is that I think there are a number of findings, which can be used in the practical application of this idea of faith-based stewardship. It must be noted that the results of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population. Furthermore, the small size of the population makes inferences questionable. Nonetheless I feel that there are a number of findings that policy makers and environmental professionals might find interesting and useful.

It was shown that the respondents are largely unaware of programs such as the National Council of Churches’ Stewards of the Bay. I offered a number of reasons why this might be so, but this is an opportunity. Perhaps the NCC and other such groups are working with large urban churches, of course, I cannot say this with any certainty. It should also be stated that there would be some logic in that approach, if in fact that were their strategy. Working with urban and large churches would allow them the NCC to reach large numbers of people. This is all conjecture, what we do know from this study is that the churches on the Eastern Shore and Northern Neck do not know about the NCC or similar programs.

There is also some irony in this situation given that the churches in my population are probably most in need of guidance and assistance. The churches on the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore are in all likelihood smaller than their counterparts in large urban areas. My population probably lacks many of the resources available to their
urban counterparts. Of course this is not universally true, but it is probably the rule rather than the exception.

The population was selected, in part, because it proximity and ties to the Bay. These are communities that are dependent on the health of the Bay so it is also unfortunate that the churches in this population are unaware of the aforementioned programs. It is probably these communities who need assistance the most. But as I have stated I see this as an opportunity.

Of course local factors will affect attitudes and the findings of this study may not hold true in other communities across the state and country. In fact, the findings may not be true for the entire population of this study. But there is evidence from this research that churches are willing to work with environmental groups, at least as it pertains to the Chesapeake Bay. These findings should be of interest to a number of parties.

I have pointed to a number of questions that the study raised. Certainly researchers or academics interested in faith and the environment could use these findings to shape their own research. Policy makers should be encouraged that there is a certain element of the religious community who is willing to work with the so-called secular community. I would argue that environmental groups could use this information, particularly local organizations, that are based in the communities. Finally, groups such as the National Council of Churches could use this to explore why their programs have low recognition among this population and possibly other groups.

It was also found that there is a statistically significant relationship between how the respondents’ congregation interpreted the Bible and whether they had instituted an
environmental program. This speaks again, to the need to involve groups such as the Evangelical Environmental Network in faith-based efforts. I would envision collaborative work between policy experts, environmental non-governmental organizations and these religious groups.
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APPENDIX 1:

Environmental Stewardship Questionnaire:

Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey. This is a student research project for a Ph.D. dissertation. Your identity will not be used in either the data analysis or final report. The number at the top of this survey is being used for tracking purposes only and is available only to the researcher. It and all research materials will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. When answering the questionnaire feel free to omit any questions you cannot or choose not to answer. Please answer all questions as a representative of your church and not a private citizen.

1. How would you identify your church?
   ____ Catholic  ____ Protestant  ____ Neither

2. How many members are there in your congregation?

Please rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements (with 1 being strong agreement and 5 being strong disagreement).

3. The church should be involved in community outreach:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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4. The church has an important role to play in the environmental movement:

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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5. Poverty is a social problem that a Christian should be involved in:

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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6. It is not appropriate for the church to partner with environmental groups:

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

7. It is appropriate for my church to become involved with projects to restore the Chesapeake Bay (please respond in your capacity as a representative of the church):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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8. Considering an individual Christian, that person would be involved in community outreach:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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9. Considering an individual Christian, that person would be involved in environmental protection:
10. Poverty is a social problem that a Christian should be involved in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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11. My church should focus its resources on resolving local, rather than national or international, issues (please respond in your capacity as a representative of the church):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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12. The environmental crisis is a moral issue for Christians:

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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13. Global climate change is a serious environmental concern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

14. My church would be more effective adopting “greener” habits than by formally partnering with environmental groups:
15. My congregation accepts a literal interpretation of the Bible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

16. Does your church’s leadership (regional or national organising body) have an official policy on environmental protection?

___ Yes  ___ No  ___ Not Sure  ___ Not Applicable

17. Please list your church’s five most important community outreach activities.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

18. Has your church in the past, or would it consider working with environmental groups to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay?

_______ Have worked with environmental groups

_______ Have not worked with environmental groups

_______ Would consider partnership with environmental groups

_______ Would not consider partnership with environmental groups

19. If you have worked with environmental groups, who initiated the partnership?
20. Which of the following activities would you consider involving your church in?
   ____ Participating in watershed or river clean ups
   ____ Planting trees
   ____ Recycling
   ____ Reducing utility usage or purchasing green credits
   ____ Changing light bulbs to energy efficient bulbs
   ____ Purchasing energy star appliances/electronics
   ____ Not sure
   ____ None of the above
   ____ Other. Please specify ____________________________

21. Please indicate your experience with or awareness of the following organisations/programs. Please circle appropriate response for each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Am not familiar with the program</th>
<th>Have heard of the program</th>
<th>Have participated in the program</th>
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   “Stewards of the Bay: A Toolkit for Congregations in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed” (produced by NCC)
22. Which of the following activities would you consider it appropriate for the church to be involved in?

- Circulating petitions
- Writing letters to elected officials
- Encouraging congregation to write letters to elected officials
- Attending demonstrations, sit-ins or similar activities
- Providing information on environmental issues to congregation
- Including environmental messages in sermons
- Allowing environmental groups or elected officials to talk at the church
- Becoming active in the movement, but without political involvement. For example, participating in clean ups of the Bay, changing light bulbs etc.
- Not sure
- None of the above
23. Has your church initiated any environmental programs?
   ___ Yes  ___ No

24. If yes, please describe these programs.
   
   

Please rate, in your opinion, the importance of the following issues (with 1 being very important and 8 being not important).

25. The health of the Chesapeake Bay is an important issue to my congregation:

   Important  Not Important
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8

26. Environmental justice (such as the location of environmental hazards) as an issue for the church to address:

   Important  Not Important
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8

27. The loss of wetlands is an important environmental issue:

   Important  Not Important
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8

28. Relative to other social issues, how important are environmental problems:

   Important  Not Important
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8
29. Environmental justice (such as the location of environmental hazards) as an issue for individual Christians to address:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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<td>1</td>
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30. The role my church *currently* plays in the environmental movement (please respond in your capacity as a representative of the church):

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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31. The role my church *should* play in the environmental movement (please respond in your capacity as a representative of the church):

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<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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