

## Christians and Creation Care

### Southern Baptist Environment and Climate Initiative

- 1) Humans must care for creation and take responsibility for our contributions to environmental degradation;
- 2) It is prudent to address global climate change;
- 3) Christian moral convictions and our Southern Baptist doctrines demand our environmental stewardship;
- 4) It is time for individuals, churches, communities, and governments to act.”

<http://www.baptistcreationcare.org/>

### Harvard Professor E.O. Wilson’s open letter to a Southern Baptist pastor:

You may well ask at this point, *Why me?* Simply because religion and science are the two most powerful forces in the world today, and especially in the United States. If religion and science could be united on the common ground of biological conservation, the problem might soon be solved.

It may seem far-fetched for a secular scientist to propose an alliance between science and religion. But the fact is that environmental activists cannot succeed without you and your followers as allies. The political process in American democracy, with rare exceptions, does not start at the top and work its way down to the voting masses. It proceeds in the opposite direction. Political leaders are compelled to calculate as precisely as they can what it will take to win the next election. The United States is an intensely religious nation. It is overwhelmingly Judeo-Christian, with a powerful undercurrent of evangelism. We secularists must face reality. The National Association of Evangelicals has 30 million members; the three leading American humanist organizations combined have, at best, a few thousand. Those who, for religious reasons, believe in saving the Creation, have the strength to do so through the political process; acting alone, secular environmentalists do not. An alliance between science and religion, forged in an atmosphere of mutual respect, may be the only way to protect life on earth, including, in the end, our own.

## **I. Why haven't evangelicals been interested in environmental issues?**

*First, the association of the environmental movement with ideologies hostile to the gospel.*

Jonathan Porritt, former head of the British Government's Sustainable Development Commission:

"I am unapologetic about asking people to connect up their own responsibility for their total environmental footprint and how they decide to procreate and how many children they think are appropriate. I think we will work our way towards a position that says that having more than two children is irresponsible. It is the ghost at the table. We have all these big issues that everybody is looking at and then you don't really hear anyone say the 'p' word." ...

*Second, the alliance between the Religious Right and business interests.*

*Third, unwillingness to reconsider lives of massive consumption.*

## **II. Why are Christians beginning to take an interest in environmental issues now?**

*First, environmental problems are growing more serious.*

*Second, people are beginning to think biblically about these issues.*

### III. What does the Bible say about the environment?

**Genesis 1:26-31** <sup>26</sup> ¶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." <sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**Genesis 2:15-20** <sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." <sup>18</sup> ¶ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." <sup>19</sup> Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

**Psalms 104:14-15** <sup>14</sup> You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth <sup>15</sup> and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.

**Psalm 104:24-35** <sup>24</sup> O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. <sup>25</sup> Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. <sup>26</sup> There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.

<sup>27</sup> These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. <sup>28</sup> When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. <sup>29</sup> When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. <sup>30</sup> When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

<sup>31</sup> May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works, <sup>32</sup> who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! <sup>33</sup> I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. <sup>34</sup> May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD. <sup>35</sup> Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more! Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!

IV. Principles for Thinking about Creation Care

- a. *God's creation gives him glory and should be preserved.*
- b. *We should conserve natural resources for maximum productivity.*
- c. *People are valuable and not a problem.*
- d. *We should love our neighbor as ourselves.*
- e. *Selfishness and greed are sins that should be repented of.*

V. What should we do?